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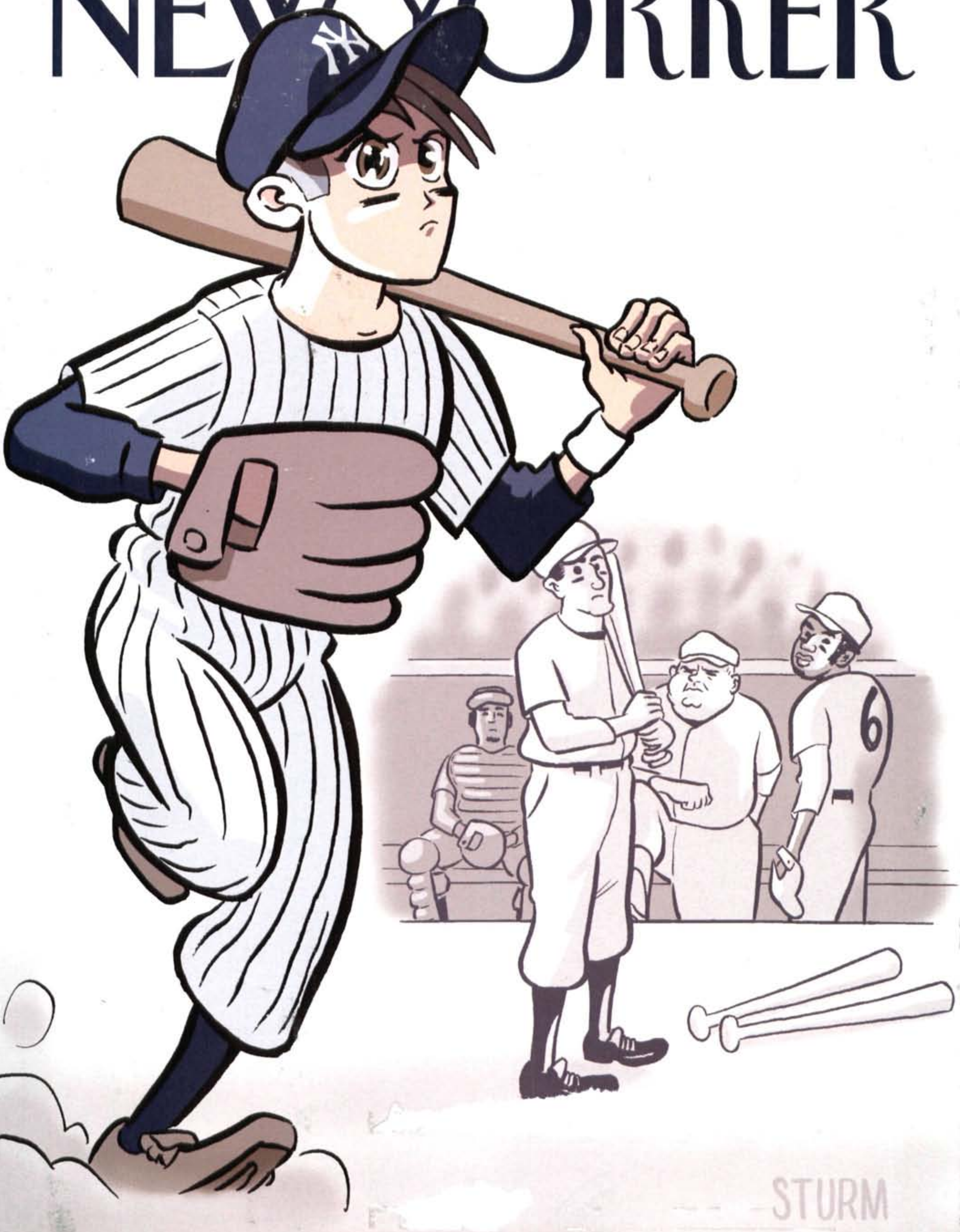

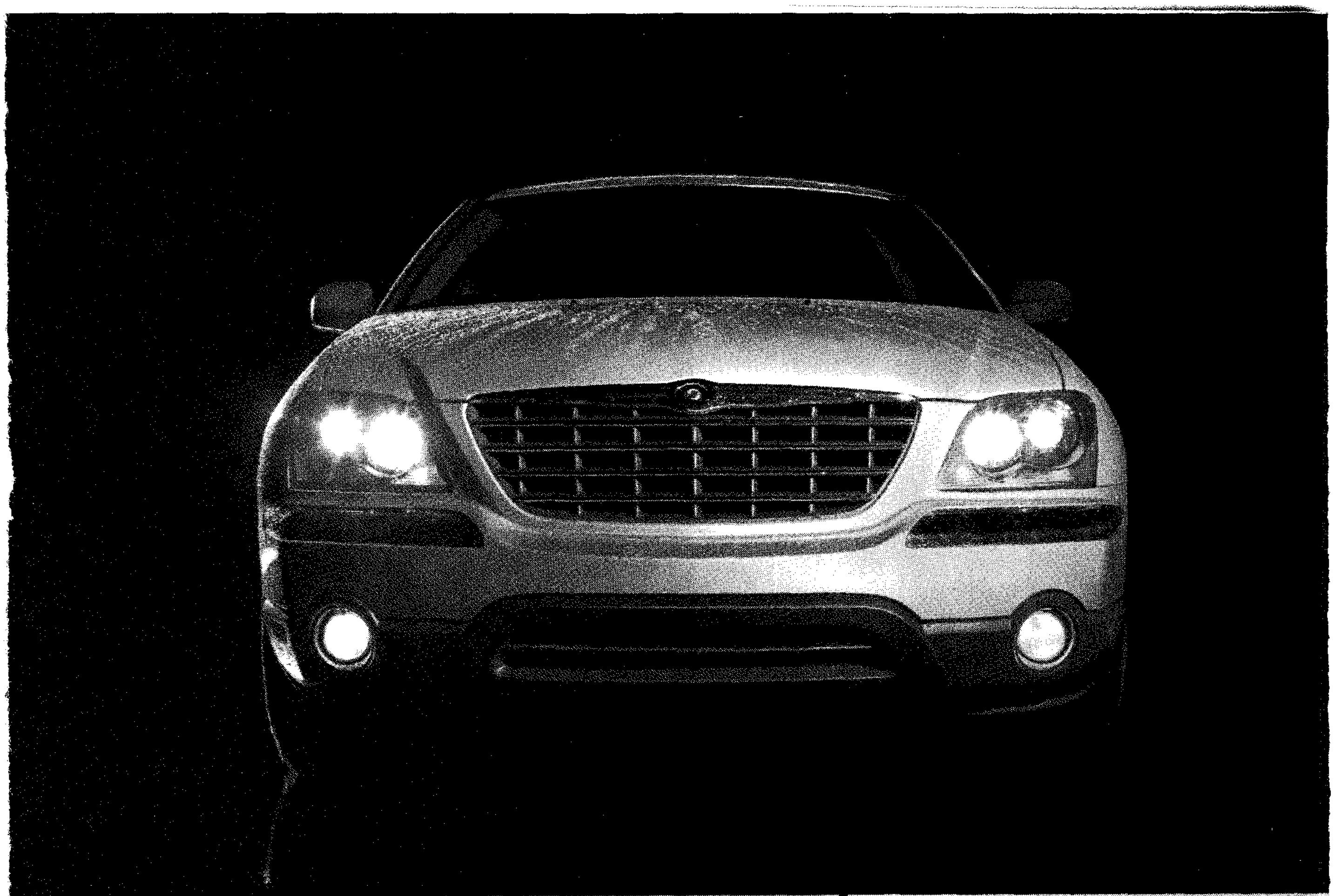

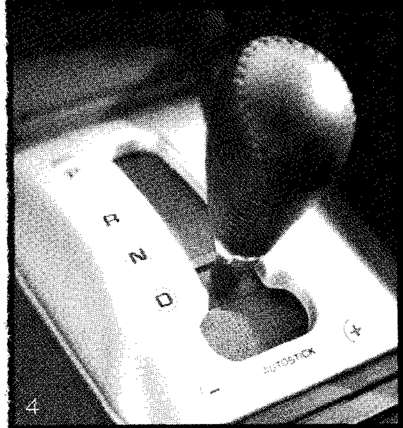
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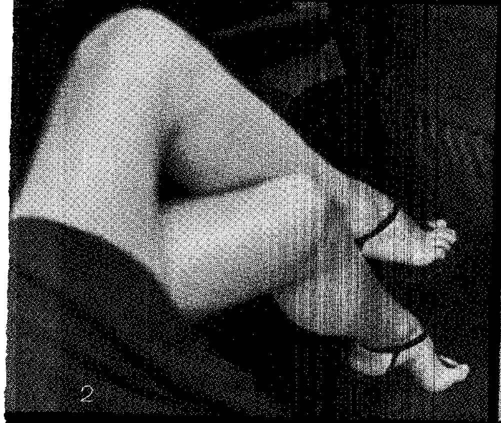
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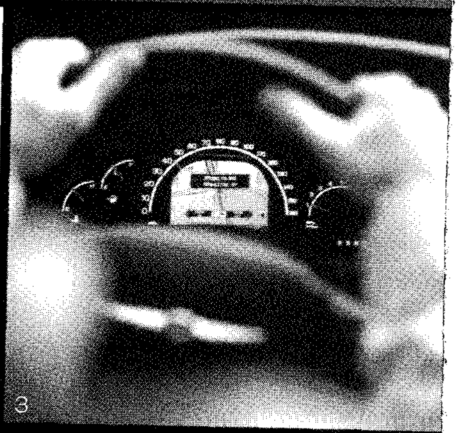
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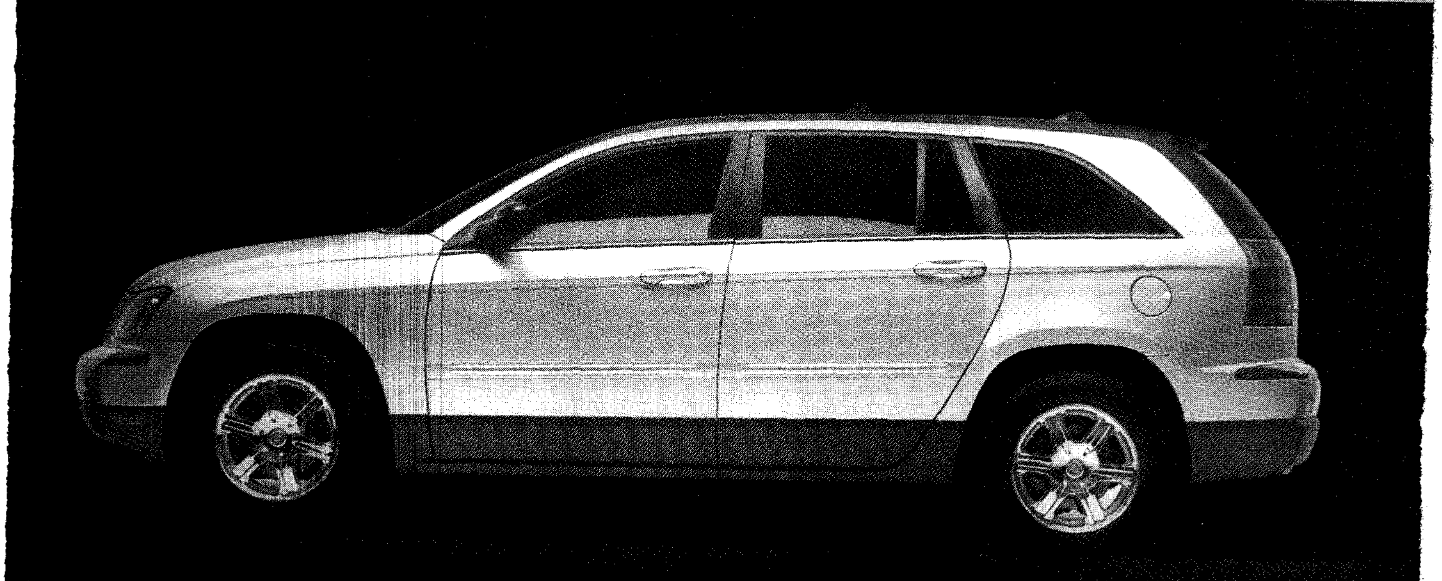

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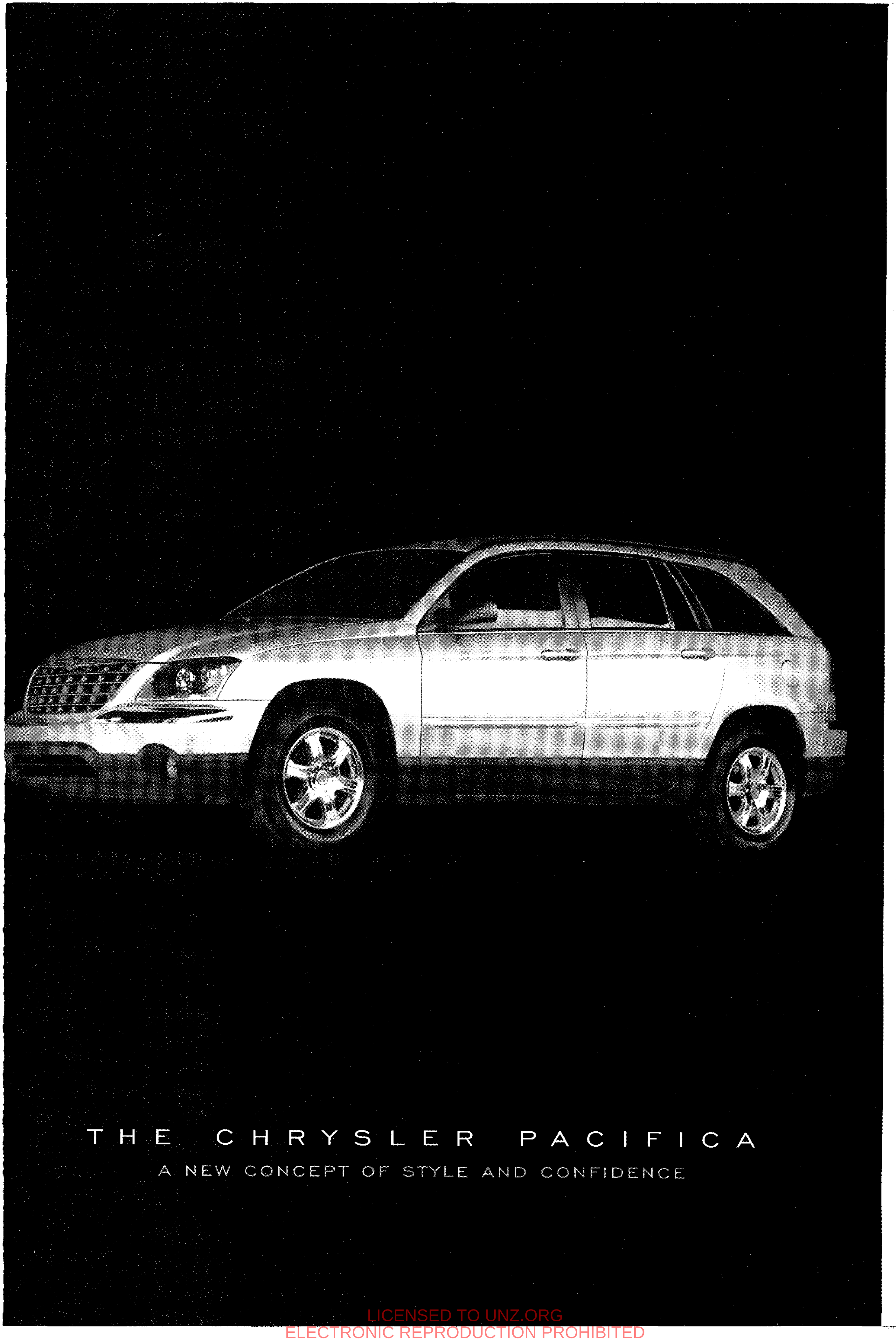
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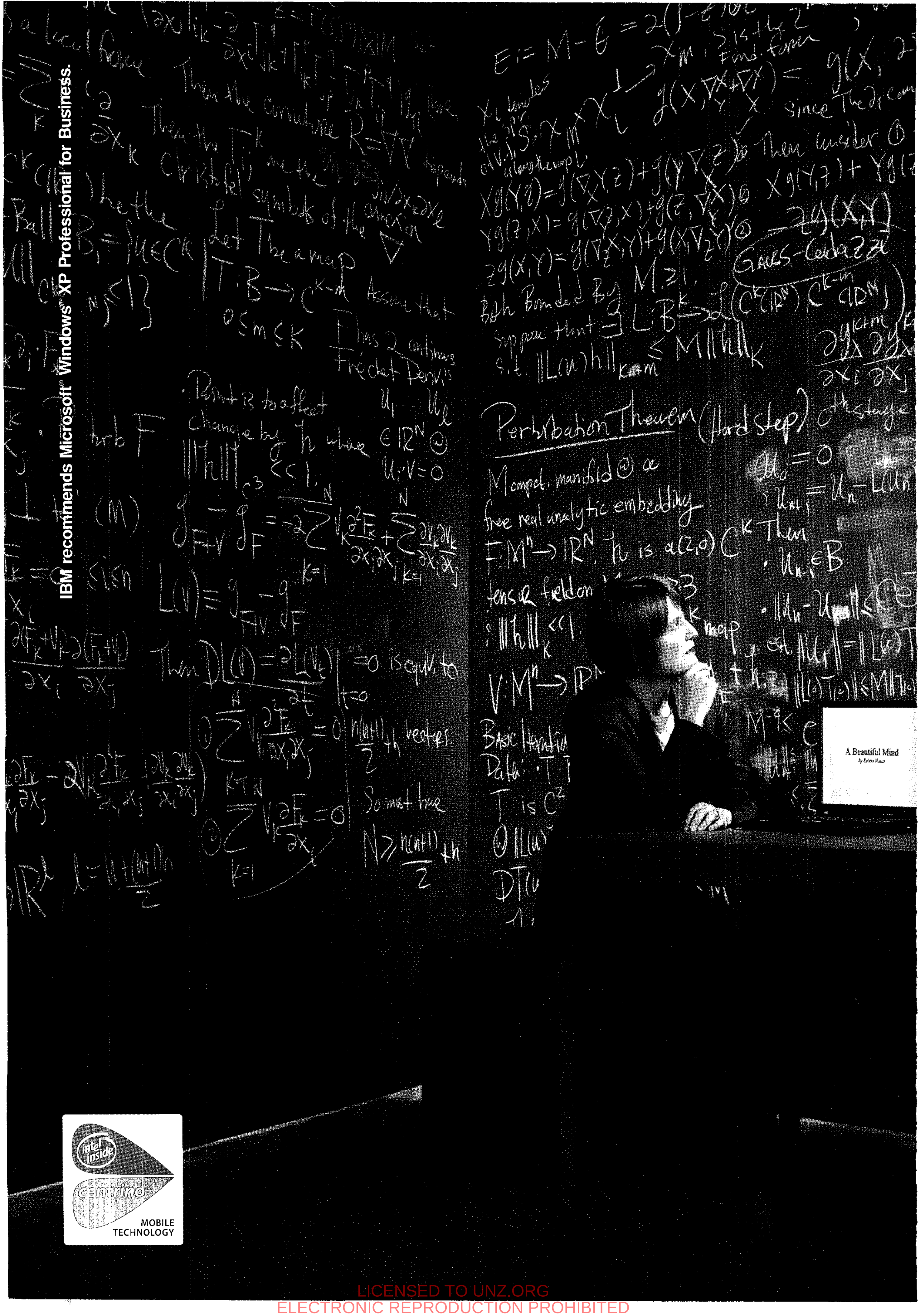
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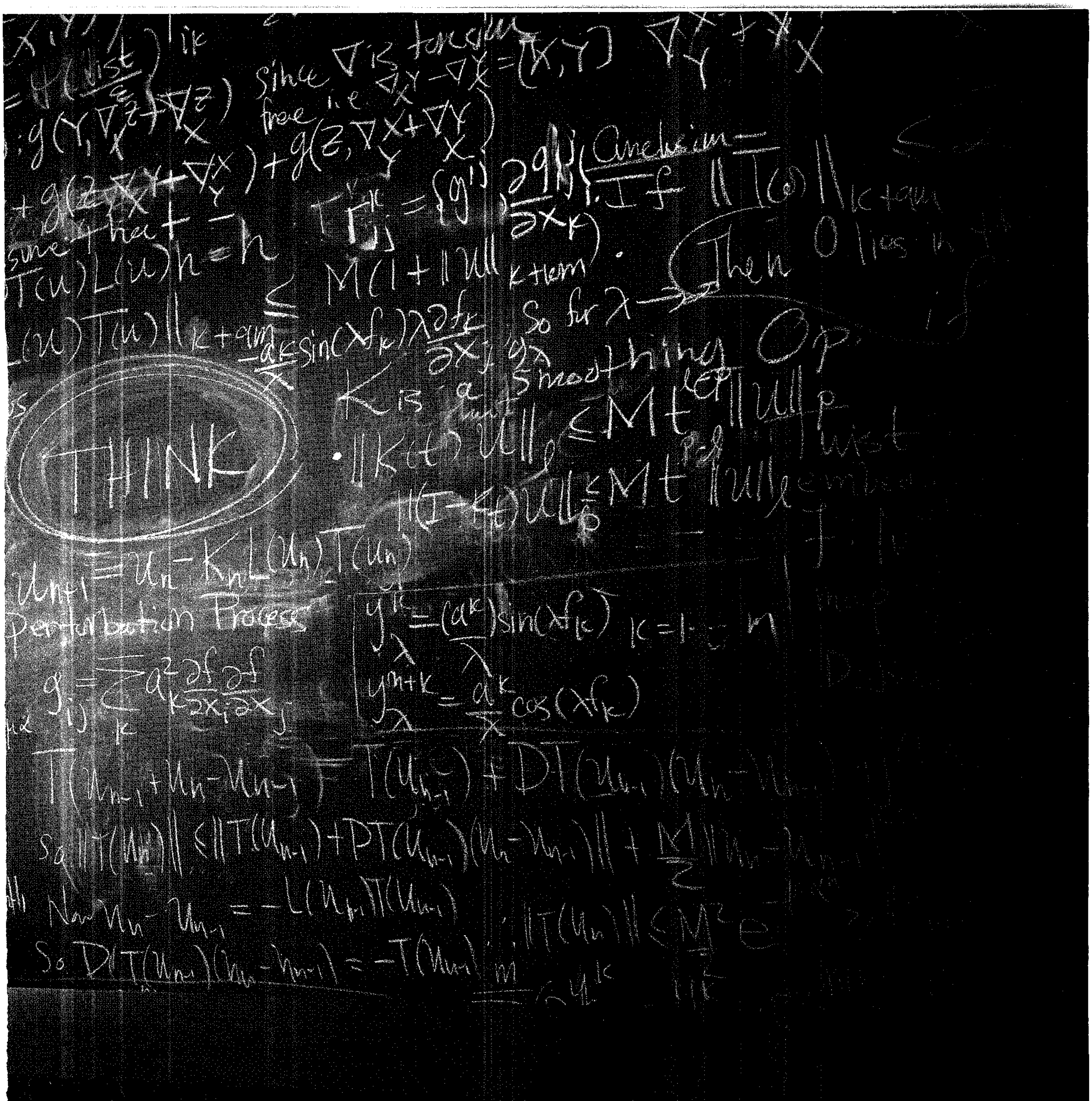

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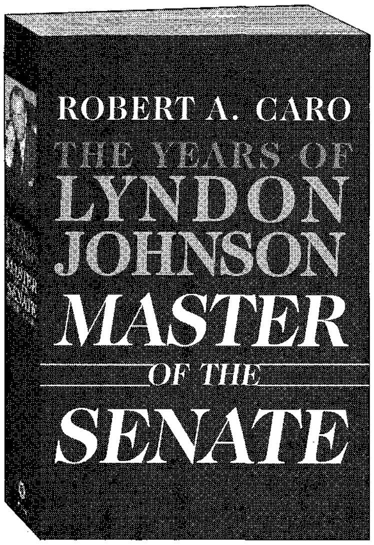

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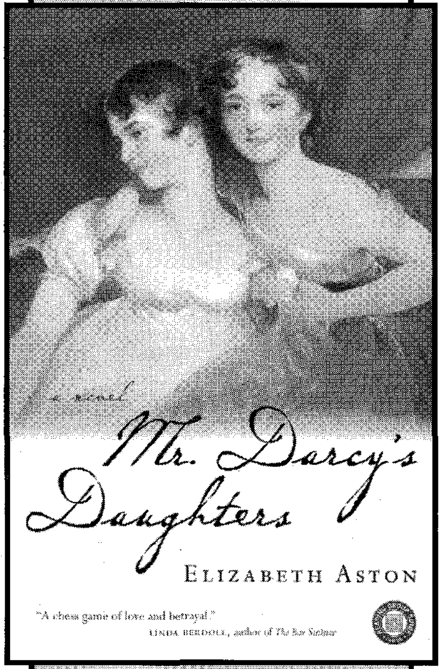
—Linda Berdoll,
author of *The Bar Sinister*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Jon Lee Anderson ("Saddam's Ear," p. 58) is a staff writer and the author of "Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life" and, most recently, "The Lion's Grave: Dispatches from Afghanistan."

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Liesl Schillinger (The Talk of the Town, p. 37) is an editor in the Goings On About Town section of the magazine.

Peter Everwine (Poem, p. 41) has published several books of poetry, including "Keeping the Night."

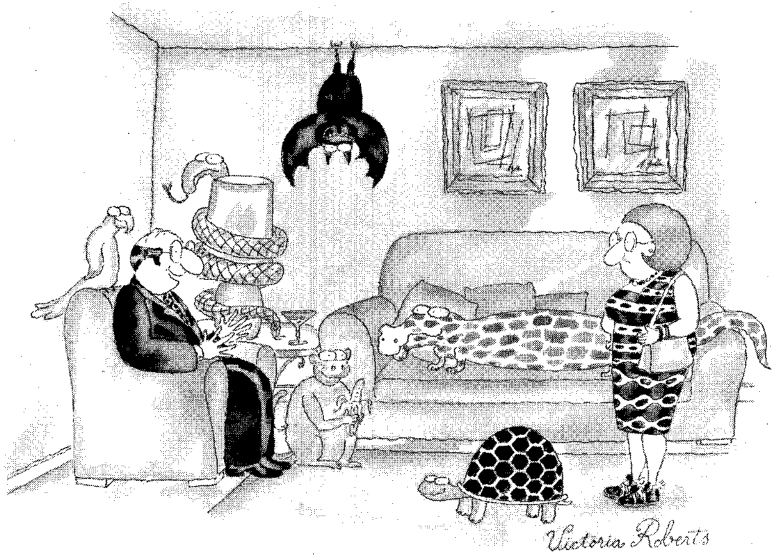
Atul Gawande ("Desperate Measures," p. 70) will join the surgical staff of the Brigham and Women's Hospital, in Boston, in July. His book "Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science" is out in paperback.

Matteo Pericoli (Sketchbook, p. 62) will publish "Manhattan Within," a continuous color drawing of the skyline of New York from inside Central Park, in October.

Antonya Nelson (Fiction, p. 82) lives in Houston. Her most recent book is "Female Trouble," a collection of short stories.

Joan Acocella (Books, p. 94) writes about books and dance for the magazine.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 102) is *The New Yorker's* television critic. ◆



"When the mayor closes a zoo, the animals have to go somewhere, Martha."

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THE MAIL

WHAT IRAQ OWES

Forgiving Iraq's foreign debt may be more difficult than James Surowiecki would like, "odious"—that is to say, contracted by a dictator and left for his people—as that debt may be (The Talk of the Town, April 7th). Virtually all of the debt, much of which relates to ordinary commercial purchases, was contracted before August of 1990, when sanctions were imposed, at a time when Iraq had diplomatic relations with most countries. Nevertheless, if Iraq was on the buying side of odious transactions, then there must also have been odious sellers, who, at best, acted irresponsibly. And Iraqis do have recourse, even within the scope of conventional debt-renegotiation practices. The statute of limitations may have passed on some of the claims, meaning that Iraq is under no legal obligation to pay them. And creditors know that, in any debt renegotiation, Iraq will request—and likely be granted—substantial debt relief, perhaps as much as seventy per cent. But asking Iraq to repay a small portion of the debts, which have been overdue for years, is not mean-spirited.

Richard Segal
London, England

MONEY AND THE IVY LEAGUE

Louis Menand aptly describes the way that élite colleges manage the competition for students with preferred characteristics ("The Thin Envelope," April 7th). These institutions are able to enroll, as Menand puts it, "an outside linebacker . . . a legacy, a Latina, and a national-science-competition finalist." What they are not as successful at, however, is enrolling poor students. In the Ivy League, only about ten per cent of the students receive Pell Grants, one of the federal government's main financial-aid programs. Yet most students from families with incomes near the national median—that is, about half of all families—qualify for Pell Grants. With all the resources available to these institutions, they could be doing a much better job of enrolling and nurturing America's most financially needy students, while still maintaining their academic standards.

Donald E. Heller, Associate Professor
Center for the Study of Higher Education
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pa.

RACE ON THE GOLF COURSE

John McPhee, in his article on a new museum devoted to golf, mentions John Shippen's appearance at Shinnecock Hills in 1896 ("The Tee Room," March 31st). He writes that "Shippen was a Shinnecock. He was actually half Native American and half African-American." In fact, although Shippen's father worked as a preacher on the Shinnecock reservation, both he and Shippen's mother were African-Americans who had most recently lived in Washington, D.C. The tournament director, Theodore Havemeyer, was said to have told the European players that Shippen was a Shinnecock, presumably to make his presence more palatable. Sportswriters have repeated the story ever since.

George DeWan
Huntington, N.Y.

McPhee writes that the golf museum being built on the Russian Tea Room site "will be the only major sports museum in the city." But it will be joined by the National Track and Field Hall of Fame, under construction at the West 168th Street Armory, which will be completed in time for the marathon in November. More than two hundred thousand athletes from around the world already come to the armory's athletic center each year, and the museum is expected to attract more visitors than Cooperstown or any other sports hall of fame.

Norbert Sander, Jr.
President, Armory Foundation
New York City

•

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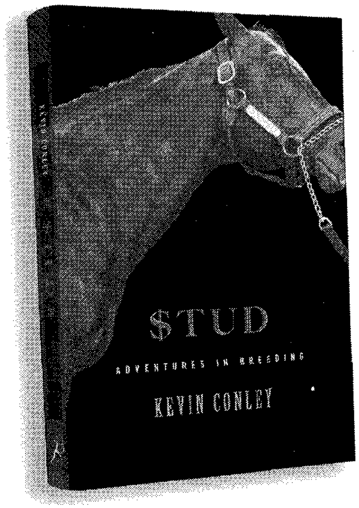

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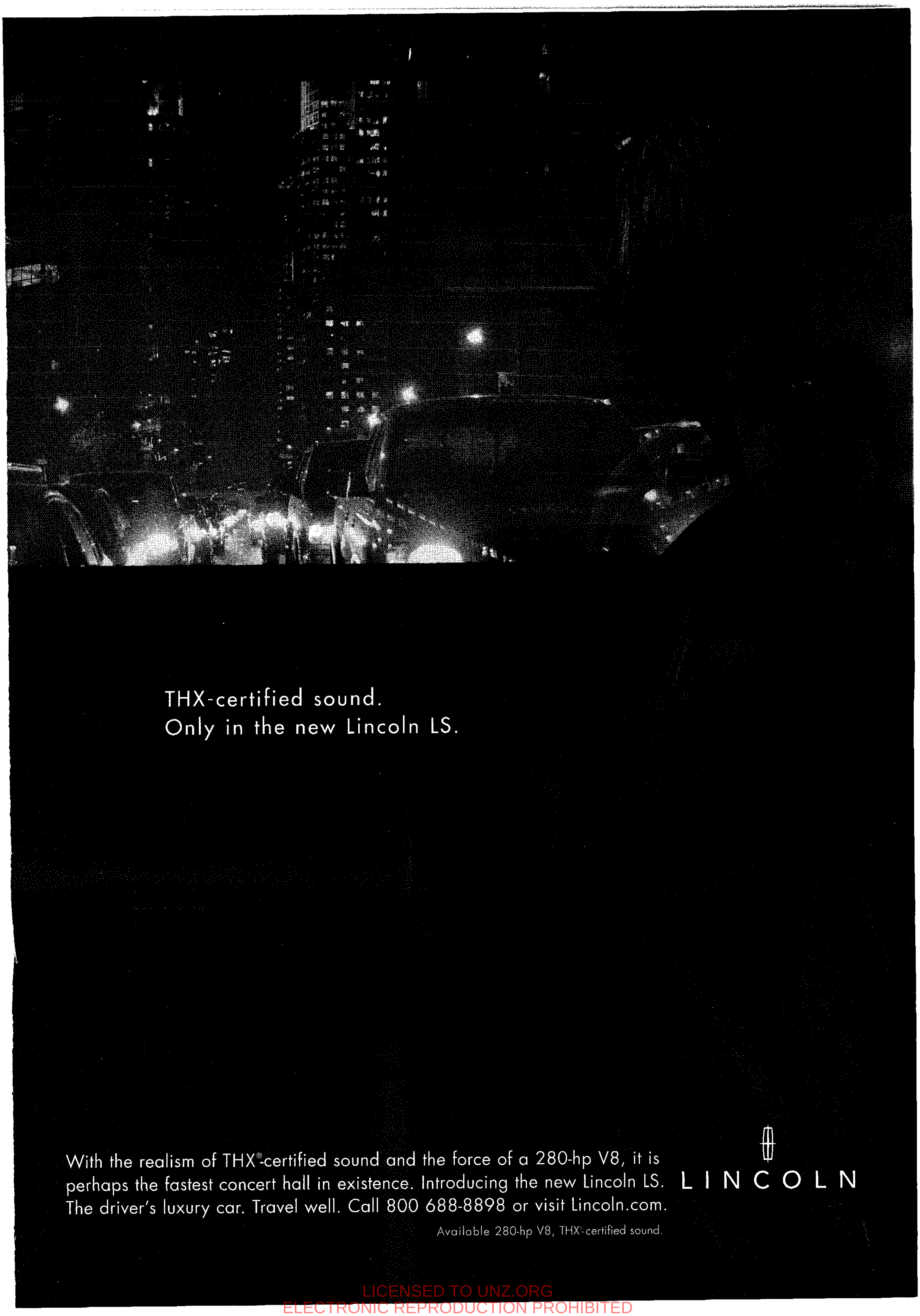

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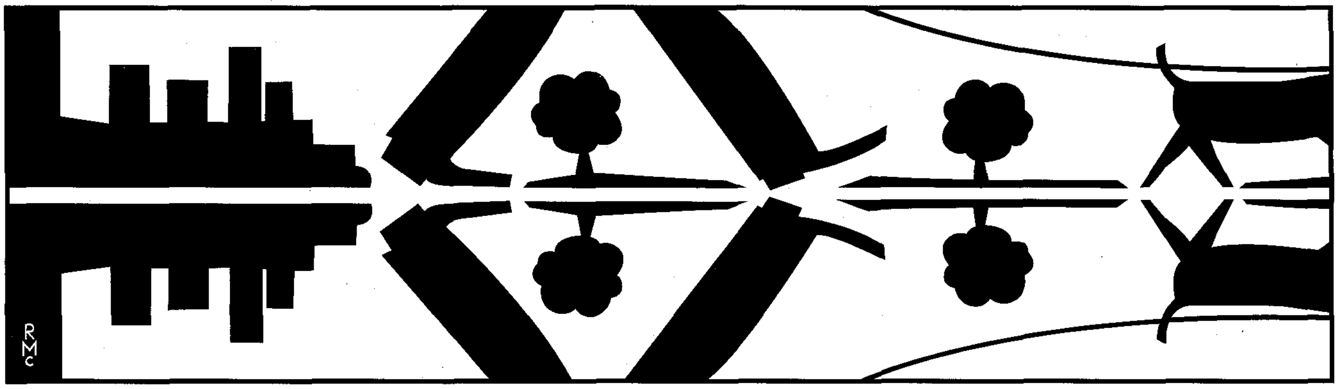

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

CAVEDWELLER
Kate Moira Ryan's new play, about a female rock star who tries to reclaim her neglected daughters when her career begins to fade, is based on the novel by Dorothy Allison. With original music by Stephen Trask ("Hedwig and the Angry Inch") and Julia Greenberg. Michael Greif directs. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

GYPSY
Bernadette Peters plays the iconic stage mother Mama Rose, in the musical by Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim, and Arthur Laurents. With original choreography by Jerome Robbins and additional choreography by Jerry Mitchell. Directed by Sam Mendes. Two previews on April 30. Opens May 1 at 6:30. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

HUMBLE BOY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the American première of a play by Charlotte Jones, loosely based on "Hamlet" and set in Cambridge, England. Blair Brown, as Flora Humble, and Jared Harris, as her son, Felix, lead the cast, which also includes Mary Beth Hurt and Paul Hecht. Directed by John Caird. Sets and costumes by Tim Hatley. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

LADIES OF THE CORRIDOR
Arnaud d'Usseau and Dorothy Parker's pointed observations of social dynamics at a New York hotel get an airing in the Peccadillo Theatre Company's revival of their 1953 play. Dan Wackerman directs. Previews begin May 2. Opens May 5 at 8. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-561-9635.)

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT
Vanessa Redgrave and Brian Dennehy are Mary and James Tyrone, and Philip Seymour Hoffman and Robert Sean Leonard are their sons, in a new production of Eugene O'Neill's family drama, directed by Robert Falls. In previews. Opens May 6 at 6. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LOOK OF LOVE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a musical revue of the songs of Burt Bacharach and Hal David. Directed by Scott Ellis and choreographed by Ann Reinking. In previews. Opens May 4 at 6:30. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

NEW YORK GILBERT & SULLIVAN PLAYERS
"The Yeomen of the Guard" comes to Symphony Space, directed by Albert Bergeret. May 1-4 at 8. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-581-1212.)

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NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND
Jonathan Ames reprises Eric Bogosian's role in a revival of the playwright's 1994 solo play about a neurotic urban loner. Opens May 1 at 7:30. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

ROMOLA AND NIJINSKY (DEUX MARIAGES)
A new play by Lynne Alvarez tackles the stormy marriage of Vaslav Nijinksy (David Barlow) and Romola De Pulsky (Kelly Hutchinson). Directed by David Levine, with choreography by Robert La Fosse. Previews begin April 30. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 212-333-4052.)

SALOME
Oscar Wilde's play about the bloody machinations of Herod's sensual stepdaughter, Salome, comes to Broadway in a staged reading that stars Al Pacino, Marisa Tomei, Dianne Wiest, and David Strathairn. Estelle Parsons directs. Opens April 30 at 8. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

WRITER'S BLOCK
Woody Allen directs a double bill of his two new one-act comedies, "Riverside Drive" and "Old Saybrook," with an ensemble cast that includes Bebe Neuwirth, Paul Reiser, and Jay Thomas. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AS YOU LIKE IT
The three female and three male actors in Erica Schmidt's production race through a very abridged text of Shakespeare's comedy at breakneck speed, rarely stopping for a gasp of air, let alone reflection. The performers put on funny hats and funny accents to play fourteen characters, and Lorenzo Pisioni, as Orlando and his brother, Oliver, takes the clowning a step further with an occasional acrobatic back flip. There's a jubilant "Let's put on a show!" sensibility to the proceedings, but Schmidt did better work with far less impressive source material directing the recent stage version of "Debbie Does Dallas." (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Closes May 4.)

AVENUE Q
This uproarious new musical tells the story of a group of neighbors struggling to make it in New York City. Unlike another musical with a similar theme—"Rent"—the show doesn't deal with life-and-death issues, and many of the neighbors are cloth puppets. This could sound like a recipe for juvenilia, but the end product is wicked fun—and definitely for grownups. Subversive, cheerful songs by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx address drunkenness, promiscuity, and racism with winking matter-of-factness, and the director, Jason Moore, guides the absurdity with zest. With a band led by Gary Adler, puppets designed by Rick Lyon, and a book by Jeff Whitty. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. Closes May 11.)

CARA LUCIA
Mabou Mines achieves a rare feat in this new production: intelligibly dramatizing a human consciousness. The consciousness in question belongs to Lucia Joyce, daughter of James, who spent her youth in Paris and the last forty-five years of her life institutionalized for a severe mental illness. Her psychiatric state has a certain prurient appeal, but the drama is more concerned with the role Lucia had in her father's art (some of Joyce's experiments with language may have been an attempt to communicate with his daughter). Sharon Fogarty, who wrote and directed, together with Clove Galilee as Young Lucia and the splendid Ruth Maleczech as Old Lucia, compellingly conveys Lucia's predicament. With attractive sets and lighting by Jim Clayburgh. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-647-0202. Closes May 11.)

A DAY IN THE DEATH OF JOE EGG
In the Roundabout's revival of Peter Nichols's 1967 semiautobiographical play, the unreliable narrator, Bri—a droll, bored schoolteacher, is brought to magnificent life by the comedian Eddie Izzard, who treats the audience as if it were his rowdy classroom, and chases his sweet-natured wife, Sheila (the expert Victoria Hamilton), around the sofa in vain pursuit of a little rumpy-pumpy. Bri's jollity has a manic, almost slapstick edge, but when the doorbell rings and the couple's brain-damaged ten-year-old daughter enters or, rather, is wheeled in, the smile is wiped off the audience's face. Directed by Laurence Boswell. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/14/03.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

DREAM A LITTLE DREAM
In the two years leading up to the Summer of Love, the Mamas and the Papas ruled the airwaves with hits like "California Dreamin'." But then the group disintegrated, frazzled by Mama Cass's psychedelic sugar cubes and singed by Mama Michelle's red-hot hippie-femme-fatale act. As Denny Doherty, a founding member of the band, puts it in this musical happening, "Our hearts just weren't in it anymore, man . . . it was just too weird." A backup band (including young doubles for Cass, Michelle, and John Phillips) accompanies Denny as he reminisces about his heyday, singing in his well-preserved sweet tenor, in a play that blends the reverential gusto of a "Loser's Lounge" covers show with a rambling dramatic structure that is part Elaine Stritch and part

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twelve-step confession. With a video montage of sixties moments by Jan Hartley. Directed by Randal Myler. (Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

ENCHANTED APRIL
In a play by Matthew Barber, adapted from the novel by Elizabeth von Arnim, four women run off to a villa in Italy to escape their dreary lives in London and recover their joie de vivre. Molly Ringwald, Elizabeth Ashley, Jayne Atkinson, and Dagmara Dominczyk play the leads. Michael Wilson directs. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

FASHION
This revival of an 1845 hit by Anna Cora Mowatt proves in delightfully silly style that some things never change. The plot and characters are familiar—such as a merchant who is blackmailed by his clerk, and the merchant's society-obsessed wife, who depends on her maid for advice—but the performances, especially by Tod Mason (as the wife) and Olivia Keister (as the maid), instill a mood of timeless fun. With well-paced direction by Alex Roe. (Metropolitan Playhouse, 220A E. 4th St. 212-995-5302. Closes May 4.)

"The Judgment of Paris," one of several rarely performed Antony Tudor ballets revived by Sallie Wilson for New York Theatre Ballet (see Dance).

ANDREA ARTZ

GOLDA'S BALCONY
In William Gibson's one-woman show about Golda Meir—the Russian immigrant from Wisconsin who helped create the state of Israel and eventually became its prime minister—Tovah Feldshuh demonstrates how national and family passions blend in the heart, making dispassionate judgment impossible. Scott Schwartz directs. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. Closes June 1.)

LIFE (X) 3
The monstrous is given an altogether upbeat French bourgeois touch in Yasmina Reza's slick new play, a ninety-minute field day of gleeful malevolence in which three possible scenarios of bad behavior at a failed dinner party play out, to no apparent point. The excellent cast includes Helen Hunt, Brent Spiner, Linda Emond, and John Turturro. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

NINE
In this elegant revival of Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston's 1982 musical—an adaptation of Fellini's "8½"—Antonio Banderas plays Guido Contini, a film director whose genius is inextricable from his childlike narcissism. Good-looking, confident, and amusing, Banderas has a European restraint that only magnifies his passionate nature. He doesn't have to strain to make the audience believe that he is catnip to women. He also has a fine voice. The other characters are satellites around Planet Guido: his put-upon wife (Mary Stuart Masterson), his battle-axe producer (Chita Rivera), and his tenacious and lubricious mistress, Carla (Jane Krakowski), who descends semi-nude from the rafters. Directed by David Leveaux, with a high-tech set (featuring an impressive spiral staircase) by Scott Pask. (4/21 & 28/03) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUR LADY OF 121ST STREET
Stephen Adly Guirgis's play speaks gorgeously to our deracinated times. A group of fractured souls congregate at the Ortiz Funeral Home in Harlem to mourn Sister Rose—a nun who had taught most of them as children—but the wake turns into a vigil when Sister Rose is stolen from her casket. Guirgis's brilliantly drawn characters have been punished by life after their school days and exhausted by their grievances. Burnished to a shine by Philip Seymour Hoffman's deft direction, "Our Lady of 121st Street" is a fever chart of the heart's deceptions. (10/14 & 21/02) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE PLAY WHAT I WROTE
This sketch-comedy soufflé, starring the British comedy team Sean Foley and Hamish McColl, with Toby Jones as their hilarious gofer, Arthur, is a goofy tribute to the English double act Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise. The show was a hit in London, but to American audiences unfamiliar with the departed duo the soufflé sags a bit, although it offers plenty of lighthearted tidbits to savor. The gimmick is that each night, Jones lassos a big star to act with McColl in a play-within-the-play called "A Tight Squeeze for the Scarlet Pimple." So far, Glenn Close and Liam Neeson have joined in the frolic. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

STONE COLD DEAD SERIOUS
Adam Rapp's latest show is a dark new American Gothic: a portrait of a family floundering in the heartland. On the outskirts of Chicago, an alienated teen computer genius (Matt Stadelmann) decides to try to save his unemployed, pain-pill-popping dad, his overworked waitress mom, and his drug-addicted sister by hopping a bus to Manhattan and competing for the million-dollar prize in a video-game tournament. Irony notwithstanding, the script shows surprising tenderness. Carolyn Cantor directs the well-knit cast. (Chashama, 135 W. 42nd St. 212-206-1515. Closes May 3.)

TALKING HEADS
In six exquisite cameos translated from television to the stage and divided into two separate shows, the British actor and playwright Alan Bennett's skills as a miniaturist are on display, and he misses nothing. Each monologue conjures up a desiccated universe with scrupulously observed detail. Directed by Michael Engler. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-4100.)

TEA AT FIVE
Matthew Lombardo's play about Katharine Hepburn is a theatrical homage: whether or not you like it will depend on the degree of your fascination with the leading lady herself. Kate Mulgrew plays the star in her prime and in her eighties, and eerily resembles her at both ages—in face and in voice. Directed by John Tillinger. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

URBAN COWBOY
This musical is big, brash, eager to please, and none too subtle. The story is the same as in the 1980 film with John Travolta and Debra Winger: small-town Texan comes to Houston, meets girl, falls in love, marries girl, then gets spooked by her need to ride the mechanical bull at the local beer hall. The savvy director, Lonny Price, keeps the action going, leaving out the explication. What the show lacks in depth the singers and dancers make up for with energy, verve, and well-toned calves and abs, but it's hard to feel anything strongly about the performers except that they are too heavily miked. With Matt Cavenaugh as Bud, Sally Mayes as his funny Aunt Corene, Jenn Colella as his girl, Sissy, and Marcus Chait as Wes, a sexy spoiler. Choreographed by Melinda Roy, with musical direction by Jason Robert Brown. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

VINCENT IN BRIXTON
Nicholas Wright's play about the young Vincent Van Gogh's affair with his London landlady shows one complicated collision between genius and domestic order. As the artist, the Dutch actor Jochum ten Haaf gives a startling portrayal of the ugly, messy pursuit of love and the recklessness of self-invention. Under the masterly direction of Richard Eyre, Vincent undresses the soul of his older lover, Mrs. Loyer (Clare Higgins), and Higgins lets us see the striptease. (3/17/03) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Closes May 4.)

A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD
This new musical, which follows a year in the life of characters created by the late children's author Arnold Lobel, is a true family affair: Robert Reale and his brother, Willie, contributed the charming book, music, and lyrics; Lobel's daughter, Adrianne, designed the spare but imaginative storybook sets; and Adrianne's husband, Mark Linn-Baker, plays the overanxious Toad. Jay Goede co-stars as his phlegmatic friend, Frog, and three supporting cast members play turtles, lizards, and birds. The play is geared toward the kiddie set—in different vignettes, the amphibious pair fly a kite, tell scary stories, and celebrate Christmas—but there's plenty for adults to enjoy, not least of which is a terrific number about Toad's "looking funny in a bathing suit." Directed by David Petrarca. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

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As a firm, UBS PaineWebber is evolving to meet the challenges of an investment environment growing ever more complex. And, simply put: we have never been in a stronger position to support the wealth-building goals of each individual client.

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UBS PaineWebber is now part of an integrated global financial services company that includes UBS Global Asset Management, an institutional asset manager and mutual fund provider; UBS Warburg, an investment banking firm; and within UBS in Switzerland, the world's largest private bank. This means we can give our clients and Financial Advisors access to wealth-management tools that draw on the combined resources and expertise of each of these businesses.

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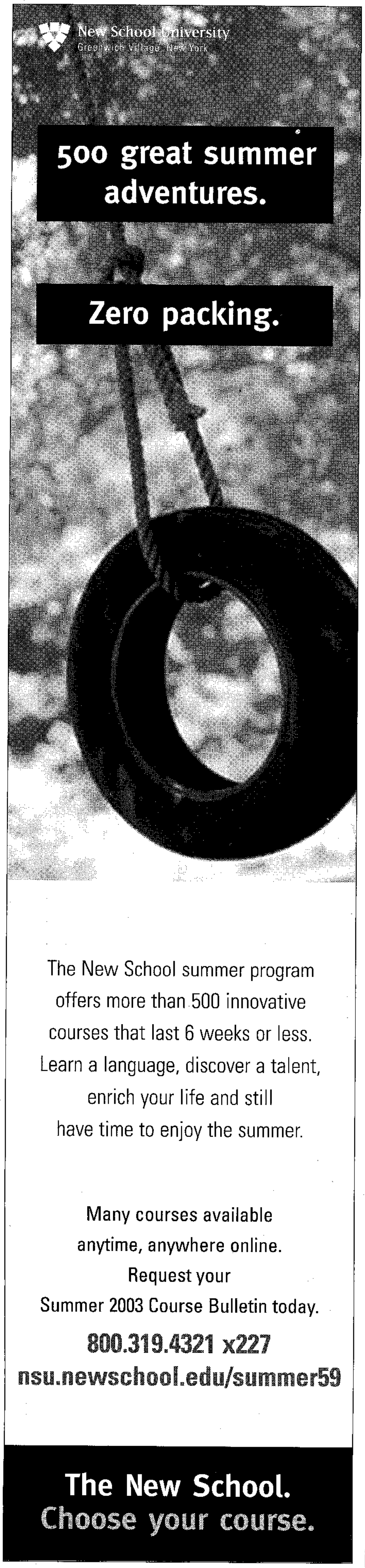
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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The spring season begins with nearly a dozen performances of Peter Martins' "Swan Lake" in its first two weeks. ♦ April 29 at 7:30 (an all-Balanchine program): "Donizetti Variations," "Symphony in Three Movements," and "Chaconne." ♦ April 30 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Agon," and "In G Major." ♦ May 1 at 8: "Chaconne," "Interplay," "Sinfonia," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ May 2 at 8, May 3 at 2 and 8, and May 4 at 3: "Swan Lake." ♦ May 6 at 7:30: "Chaconne," "Interplay," "Sinfonia," and "In G Major." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570.)

"HIGH TIDE"
Performing a headstand atop another person's feet requires a peculiar intimacy, and in Lava's season at Dance Theatre Workshop, the choreographer Sarah East Johnson explores that bond, using acrobatics as a metaphor for emotional connection. Six brawny women fling themselves fearlessly into feats of daring: two performers wrapped back to back in Ace bandages flip over like a human Slinky; dancers jump through hoops in intricate and accelerating variations and stack up in a perfectly spaced line of headstands. The women add an element of uncertainty to the act by improvising spoken monologues about their love lives, juxtaposing their human vulnerability with their thrilling strength. With a fluid video backdrop of Lava lamps and waterfalls, designed by Nancy Brooks Brody. (Bessie Schönberg Theatre, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 1-4 at 7. Through May 18.)

LES BALLETS DE MONTE-CARLO
From the principality of Monaco comes "Cendrillon," Jean-Christophe Maillot's stylish retelling of Cinderella, presented not as a fairy-tale romance but as a grief-haunted search for a lost ideal. As the ballet begins, Cinderella cradles a dress left by her deceased mother, and in the ballet's final image, her father clutches the same dress, his head tilted toward the staircase that Cinderella has ascended with her melancholy prince. The stepmother and her daughters are suitably cruel, all angles and jabbing pointe work, but the golden godmother steals the show. Entering the ball on the arms of attendants, she steamrolls over the prince in a flurry of feet. With a score by Prokofiev and moving panels by Ernest Pignon-Ernest that suggest the pages of a storybook made of brushed steel. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 1-3 at 7:30.)

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
For twenty-five years, the graceful vision of José Limón and Doris Humphrey, which combines elastic technical artistry with spiritual, idealized subjects, has been been preserved by Carla Maxwell. This season, she celebrates her quarter century as artistic director of the Limón Dance Company with two programs of new and repertory works, including "Étude," "Invention," "The Moor's Pavane," and the New York premières of "Psalm" and "Phantasy Quintet," which all show the group's flowing style, as well as Jonathan Riedel's "The Unsightful Nanny," a group piece inspired by the subversive tales of Edward Gorey and set to the music of Saint-Saëns. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. April 30-May 2 and May 6 at 8, May 3 at 2 and 8, and May 4 at 2 and 7:30. Through May 11. Please call theatre for full program details.)

NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET
The Anglo-American ballet choreographer Antony Tudor had an elegant English style and a nose for sorrow and evil. His work is too little seen today. His longtime dancer Sallie Wilson has restaged three early pieces for N.Y.T.B. One, "Lilac Garden"—in which a man and a woman, about to enter into a loveless marriage, take leave of their respective lovers—is a classic, but the other two are rarities. In "Les Mains Gauches" ("The Left Hands"), a fortune-teller foresees the wreck of a young man's romantic hopes. In "The Judgment of Paris" (1938), the fabled contest is reënacted in a dive as three worse-for-the-wear dames vie for the attention of a client who, in the end, prefers the bottle. After each performance Wilson will lead a discussion of Tudor's work. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160. May 1 and 2 at 7:30 and May 3 at 2 and 7:30.)

ANDREW JANNETTI & DANCERS
The neo-Romantic group celebrates its twentieth anniversary with a retrospective at the Duke that includes three premières (notably, "Water Cello Dreams," a quintet set to a Cello Suite by Bach, played by Pablo Casals), and the duet "Unforgiven," performed by Jannetti and Lauren Naslund. (229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. April 30 at 7:30, May 1-3 at 8, and May 4 at 3. Please call theatre for complete schedule.)

DANSPACE PROJECT
Johannes Wieland and company perform in "Beneath," part of the City/Dans series. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. May 1-4 at 8:30.)

TABLES FOR TWO

PAMPANO
209 E. 49th St. (212-751-4545)—You'd think that of the three tenors, Pavarotti would be the one with the restaurant, but instead it's Plácido Domingo, opening for the third time, next door to Smith & Wollensky. His first engagement there, Domingo's, lasted five years, but the encore closed in just two weeks, so this time around the famous name is off the marquee and the portrait of the restaurateur as El Cid has been replaced by sandy-white walls with seashell-and-palm-tree bas-reliefs. More faux palms, woven into fans, rotate lazily overhead. The waiters wear guayabera shirts; the setting is now, someplace by the sea.

The seafood menu, under the direction of Richard Sandoval, of Maya, is strictly upper-class Mexican, a refined mestizo blend with traditional elements, like tomatillo salsas and chile pastes, interpreted lightly. There's a guacamole to start, but the smoked marlin provides a more seaworthy and adventuresome dip. The tuna ceviche (closer to a sushi in salsa than a true citrus ceviche) comes with mango and a hint of *chile poblano*, and the lobster tacos, in perhaps the finest performance in a seafood appetizer this season, balance black-bean purée and a smoky *chile de árbol* salsa in dark counterpoint to the lobster chunks and avocado shavings. The order has three; do not let dining companions imagine that you'll share. The entrées can feel like too much of a commitment after that—the signature dish, pompano steamed in banana leaf, is beautiful to look at, but boring in the long haul—although that attention-span deficit might also be due to the *copas especiales*. The Pampano margarita comes in various shades of fruit, either virgin or, if not, with a selection from the pick-your-poison slate of connoisseur tequilas.

At the end of a recent meal, two things brought the attention sharply back in focus. The first was dessert; all four choices, especially the *pastel de elote* (a sweet corn cake) and the chocolate taco, were sophisticated treasures. The second was the arrival of the *divo* himself, who sat down to dine around ten. Naturally, he ordered a Pasión—a mix of tequila and passionfruit. This time out, he has something to toast. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $19.95-$25.50.)

—*Kevin Conley*

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

PEARL JAM
The earnest, flannel-sporting poster boys for accessible grunge rock may have lowered their profile over the past decade, but that didn't stop a nation of throaty Eddie Vedder wanna-bes from appearing in their wake. Pearl Jam is no longer ubiquitous, but it

is still outspoken, and the band recently courted trouble by indulging in some pointed anti-Bush commentary at a concert in Colorado. (Nassau Coliseum. 212-307-7171. April 30 at 7:30.)

BRIGHT EYES

Conor Oberst, the celebrated front man for this Nebraskan outfit, has been making albums for years, even though he's only in his early twenties. His talent, experience, and quavering voice explore crushing and precious unhappiness. With **Arab Strap.** Named after a marital aid, this Scottish duo practices a bizarre brand of mostly acoustic, half-sung, half-narrated melancholia. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-7171. May 1 at 8.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

May 1-3 at 8: The astonishing French accordion and bandoneon player **Richard Galliano** coaxes whole worlds of sound from his instruments, mixing Gallic poetry with tough jazz sonorities. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building.) ♦ May 2-3 at 8: The **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** is joined by the Ghanaian drummer **Yacub Addy** and his ensemble Odadaa! (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St.) (For more information about both shows, call 212-721-6500.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE

May 1 at 8: The institute's "Interpretations" series brings in the **Rova Saxophone Quartet** and **Patricia Burgess.** Having recorded their own orchestrated version of John Coltrane's avant sonic boom "Ascension," which they did in 1995, the Rova Saxophone Quartet are obviously game for just about anything. The polish of this celebrated self-contained unit is matched only by their daring. The composer and performer Burgess will première a new theatre piece. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St.) ♦ May 3 at 9, until 8 the following morning: The sitar master **Ustad Vilayat Khan** and the Hindustani vocal duo **Rajan** and **Sajan Misra** join another forty or so performers for a full night of Indian classical music. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 110th St.) (For more information about both events, call 212-545-7536.)

RICHARD THOMPSON

The thorny English troubadour stops by with songs from his new release, "The Old Kit Bag." (Town Hall. May 2-3 at 8.)

MINISTRY

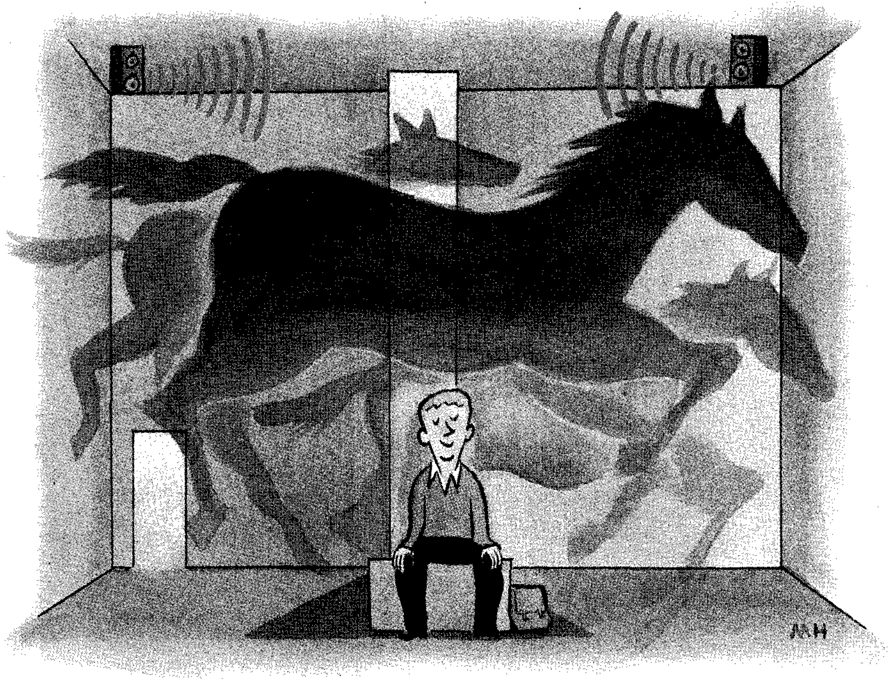
The leading proponents of American industrial rock (before Nine Inch Nails stole their thunder), Chicago's Ministry devolved from a surly synth-pop act into a mechanized squadron of substance-abusing cyberpunks with a Black Sabbath fixation. After taking the aesthetic of heavy metal to its discordant limit, Ministry has rediscovered hooks and melody on its new album, "Animositisomina," and is back to restore its bad name. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. May 4 at 7.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS

376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—This little Francophile watering hole and performance space takes its name from a colorful Parisian neighborhood that's packed with North African immigrants. Here in New York City, the club brings energy and diversity to a traditionally bourgeois corner of Brooklyn. Over the past year its tiny stage has been home to rock, jazz, and folk musicians, along with a regular roster of readings and movie screenings. Barbès celebrates its first anniversary with a typically eclectic and worthy lineup that includes the local Balkan brass band **Zagnut Circus Orkestar** on May 1, the Continental madmen of **Bébé Eiffel** (which is led by Olivier Conan and Vincent Douglas, the proprietors of Barbès) on May 2, the mandolin virtuoso and bluegrass star **Johnny Staats** and the two-time national flat-picking champion guitarist **Robert Shafer** on May 3, and the literary outfit **One Ring Zero** on May 4.



Debora Warner's installation at I-20 uses the sounds of horses (see Galleries—Chelsea).

MARCELLUS HALL

BOTTOM LINE

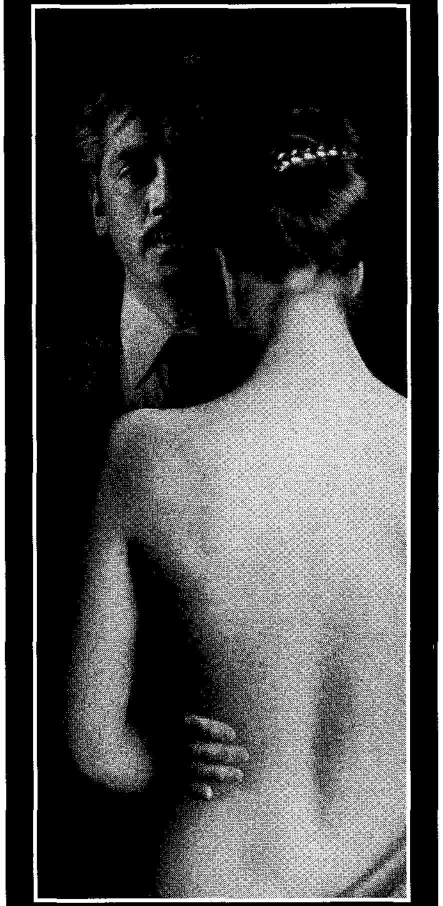
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (212-228-6300)—May 1: The vocalist **Marc Anthony Thompson,** who often performs as Chocolate Genius, inaugurates the "Songrider" series, a monthlong weekly survey of the last forty years of pop music. May 2: The feisty post-punk feminist **Jill Sobule** and the Brooklyn-based singer **Josh Joplin.** May 3: **Dave Alvin** leads his band the Guilty Men through a night of gritty roots rock. May 5: **Ed Palermo's Big Band** performs the entirety of Frank Zappa's "One Size Fits All" and "Hot Rats" albums.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 1: The reverb-saturated country rock of **My Morning Jacket.** May 2: The Brit-pop ensemble **Cousteau.** May 3: **Longwave** weaves broad sonic tapestries with its guitars. May 5: The **Libertines,** England's much fêted contenders in the garage-punk revival.

The New York Times
Elvis Mitchell,

""The Dancer Upstairs' resonates with the emotional intelligence of Graham Greene... its rhythms take hold and pull you in."



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JAVIER BARDEM

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Official Selection San Sebastian Film Festival
Official Selection American Film Institute Film Festival
Premiere Selection Sundance Film Festival
Official Selection Chicago Film Festival
Official Selection Regus London Film Festival

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In Select Theatres April 30

CUTTING ROOM
19 W. 24th St. (212-691-1900)—May 2: **Professor & Maryann.** Like their "Gilligan's Island" namesakes, this long-running Staten Island duo balances the cerebral (courtesy of guitarist-songwriter Ken Rockwell) with dark good looks (the helium-throated singer Danielle Brancaccio). On their upcoming release, "Runaway Favorite," the pair is joined by bass, drums, and a string section.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (212-533-7000)—May 3: **Damien Rice** is an exceedingly romantic singer from Ireland with an old-fashioned entertainer's work ethic. His reputation as a live performer is matched by the quality of his varied and ambitious début, "O," an album of understated gems that concludes with an operatic splash. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

The Park Slope nightspot Barbès celebrates its first anniversary.

ZOHAR LAZAR

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 1-3: Randy Cordeiro, a Bay Area singer who goes by the name Surreal Neil, leads **Superdiamond,** a decade-old, surprisingly popular sextet that pays tribute to the pop icon Neil Diamond.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 1: Mark Stewart and Rob Schwimmer are a pair of serious sidemen who follow their musical ids when they perform as **Polygraph Lounge.** Using everything from toy instruments to theremins, they invoke the spirit of the twentieth-century comedic bandleader Spike Jones. Later on May 1: **Alison Brown** left a life in investment banking for a career as a banjo musician. Anyone who thinks this was a foolish move hasn't heard her playing. May 2: **Laptop** is Jesse Hartman, a Long Island native turned downtown musician with a hundred-and-twenty-gigabyte-sized sense of humor. As a teen-ager he played guitar for the punk legend Richard Hell, and as an adult he favors eighties-derived synth pop that calls to mind Robert Palmer and a roomful of laughing gas.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—April 30: **Chip Taylor,** the legendary songwriter whose credits include "Wild Thing" and "Angel of the Morning," teamed up last year with a talented young fiddler and singer named **Carrie Rodriguez** for the record "Let's Leave This Town." After spending a decade as a professional gambler, Taylor returned to the music business with a tour in 1993 and a 1996 comeback album, "Hit Man." With Taylor and Rodriguez playing together like John Prine and Iris DeMent, the new album seals the deal on Taylor's welcome return.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—May 2: **Damien Rice** (see Fez). May 4: **Mike Watt,** the affable, big-grinned bass player for the legendary Minutemen and later for Firehose, broadened the horizons of punk rock with his jazzy, improvisational playing.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—May 2: The **Supersuckers** play a tongue-in-cheek brand of high-octane punk rock that celebrates the simpler pleasures of life, like driving fast, drinking, and being a gleefully belligerent ne'er-do-well. May 3: **Mike Watt** (see the Mercury Lounge). May 5: **Damien Rice** (see Fez).

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—May 1: The **Kills,** another girl-boy back-yard-rock band, doesn't break any new ground, but they're less obsessed with purity than their blues-loving colleagues, and they're engagingly sloppy. May 4: A night of Latin rock with **Carmelize, Radio Mundial,** and **Si*Sé.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through May 24: The vocalist **Karen Akers** offers a program of show tunes, including selections from "Nine," "Brigadoon," and "Grand Hotel." Dining.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—May 3: The clarinettist **Andy Biskin's** effervescent quintet slams together neo-Dixieland, Jimmy Giuffre-esque chamber jazz, and Raymond Scott-inspired zaniness while still finding plenty of room for inspired improvisation and offbeat composition.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—April 30: **Barbara Carroll's** authentic bebop piano (when she was young, Carroll drew attention on Fifty-second Street, where the likes of Charlie Parker would sit in with her), subtle vocalizing, and encyclopedic knowledge of standards make for a civilizing night out. May 1-3: The **Lee Konitz** nonet. The alto-saxophone genius Konitz was in the mother of all jazz nonets, Miles Davis's mid-century "Birth of the Cool" band, and for the past thirty years Konitz has periodically convened a mid-sized ensemble to set off the poetic logic of his lucid improvisations. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—May 1-4: The two-man, two-woman vocal unit that is the **Manhattan Transfer** has been successfully updating the Lambert, Hendricks & Ross model for three decades.

DANNY'S
346 W. 46th St. (212-265-8133)—Saturdays and Sundays: Fifty years ago, no one sounded like **Blossom Dearie,** and no one sounds like her today, except, miraculously, Dearie herself, who has retained the dew-on-the-grass freshness of her crystalline voice.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through May 17: **Keely Smith** pays tribute to Count Basie at this outing, as she does on her most recent album, "Keely Swings Basie Style . . . with Strings."

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through May 4: The **Hank Jones** trio. He's the only major pianist to have played with Charlie Parker who is still alive, but that ace gig is just one of a number of high points on Jones's five-decade C.V. Nearly eighty-five, he still possesses a silken touch, ineffable taste, and limpid technique; as a piece of living history, he's a yardstick for all quality pianists to measure themselves against. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The pianist **Makoto Ozone** (here with his trio May 1-4) is best known for his long-standing partnership with the master vibraphonist Gary Burton, whom he hooked up with at the Berklee School of Music in the early eighties. But Ozone has also displayed more than enough vigor and finesse to stand as his own man. Dining.

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200, ext. 107)—Cabaret performances return to this uptown temple of German art on May 2, when **KT Sullivan,** a knowing interpreter of the Great American Songbook, begins a month of Friday appearances.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—April 30-May 4: You can't get a more prosaic band name than the **Three Altos plus Rhythm,** but, when it comes to a passionate mix of players, the hornmen Gary Barz, Sonny Fortune, and Vincent Herring, along with the pianist George Cables, the bassist Cecil McBee, and the drummer Billy Hart, will be hard to beat.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through May 4: Once a name perpetually linked to two saxophone titans—Phil Woods and Joe Lovano—the trumpeter **Tom Harrell** is now leading a polished quintet that pairs his burnished horn lines with his own impressive saxophone foil, **Jimmy Greene.** The fact that both were once under the wing of hard-bop patriarch Horace Silver (albeit separated by two decades) might account for their interactive acuity. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting,"** a ravishing and keenly illuminating show, marshalls great paintings to demonstrate a miracle in art history: the rebirth of Spanish Baroque painting in nineteenth-century Paris, brought about by Édouard Manet. At one end of its two-century leap, the show is augmented with works by Zurbarán, Murillo, and other Spaniards, and, at the other, by relevant figures from Delacroix to Sargent. But the summit meeting of Velázquez and Manet dominates. Through June 8. ◆ A mid-career retrospective of the photographs and video portraits of the German photographer Thomas Struth. Through May 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Even what's wrong with **"Matisse**

I was born fast.
Faster than those who would challenge me.

I was born strong.
Full of heart.
Quiet in confidence.
And blessed with might.

I was born with instinctive quickness.
Quick to recognize.
To adapt.
To respond.
Quick to be quick.

I was born to be seen
by everything but the wind.

I was born at the beginning of the last century,
but I am undoubtedly of the next century.

I am

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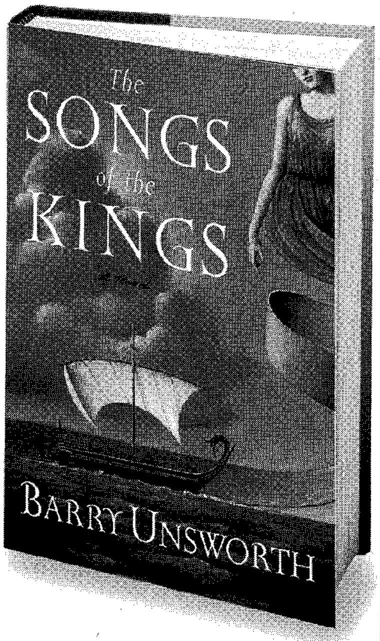

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—*The Boston Globe*

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political satire."
—*The San Francisco Chronicle*

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Picasso," the magnificent show that deploys a hundred and thirty-three works by the twin godheads of modern painting, is revelatory. It is a double-barrelled blast of an exhibition with a popgun thesis: that Picasso and Matisse goaded and influenced each other. So do most artistic contemporaries. In any case, trying to absorb fine curatorial points of comparison between such stunners as Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and Matisse's "Bathers with a Turtle" is like trying to check the oil in a speeding truck. The show's payoff comes from the jagged, overwhelming sense it gives of how different the two were as men and artists—as antithetical, and evenly matched, as Ali and Frazier. Through May 19. (Open Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays, 10 to 5, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle."** Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—Elie Nadelman, the Polish-American sculptor, had his first major success in 1909 in Paris with an exhibition of classically inspired heads and statues. Around the same time, Nadelman was beginning to update fourth-century Greek sculpture with contemporary touches such as bowler hats, bow ties, and exaggerated contours. In this retrospective, more than two hundred sculptures, arranged chronologically, trace the evolution of Nadelman's concerns: from his early busts, which speak to ancient ideals of beauty, to his jazz-era middle works, folksy wooden genre figures of dancers and circus performers with sinuous bodies and gessoed features, to his final postwar efforts, rows of plaster figurines that look like toy-size gods and monsters. Through July 20. ♦ **"Paul Sietsema: Empire"** presents the chef d'œuvre of an experimental filmmaker: a ragged twenty-four-minute silent 16-mm. film that bristles with pans, fades, jump cuts, and so on of static objects in negative black and white or red and white. The main subjects are beautifully made models of an eighteenth-century French rococo interior and of Clement Greenberg's art-filled living room in 1964—shrines of extreme taste, which Sietsema's camera explores like a tongue probing broken teeth. (The models and some related drawings are displayed elsewhere.) The film's hermetic fervor becomes as disquieting as urgent warnings in a language that you don't quite understand. Sequences of dizzying geometric animation and ominous closeups of a grasshopper vary the spell. Through June 8. ♦ **"Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio,"** a retrospective featuring the designs of the husband-and-wife team. Through May 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (212-878-2550)—The New York début of Dario Robleto, a Texan artist whose work combines the obsessive craft of Tom Friedman (homemade marbles), the d.j. sampling of Christian Marclay (butterfly antennae made from melted-down Peggy Lee and Pulp records), and an interest in alchemical transformation (materials include glass formed by meteorites and by nuclear explosions). The show's centerpiece is a set of ten sculptures displayed in a cluster of vitrines atop flashing lights that conjure both discothèques and spacecraft. Nearby, a series of digital photographs re-create a botanical experiment aboard the space shuttle Challenger. Robleto's deceptively whimsical, labor-intensive art carries a serious message about the mysterious relationship between destruction and redemption. Through July 3. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—Christian Schad (1894-1982) painted portraits until his final days, but he was at his gimlet-eyed best for two short years, from 1927 to 1929. A sinister elegance suffuses his razor-sharp paintings of Weimar Republic café society; they suggest "The Berlin Stories" by way of Bronzino. You can spot a shadowy side to all the erotic glamour: dirt collects under polished fingernails, and fine blue veins fissure alabaster breasts. These portraits hang beside an excellent selection of works by better-known members of the Neue Sachlichkeit ("New Objectivity"), including Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Max Beckmann. Through June 9. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW YORK LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
40 Lincoln Center Plaza (212-870-1630)—The exhibit **"Vaslav Nijinsky, Creating a New Artistic Era"** recalls the celebrated movement of a protean talent with statuary, photographs, costumes, and excerpts from the danseur's diary. A 1912 Rodin bronze captures Nijinsky at twenty-three years old, while all around that monument to muscular flexibility, black-and-white prints chronicle the virtuoso's career: as the golden slave in "Schéhérazade," as the sad, love-sick puppet in "Petrouchka," and as Count Albrecht in "Giselle," the nobleman who was condemned to dance himself to death. Through May 3. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, noon to 6; Thursdays, noon to 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—Yoko Ono's **"Freight Train,"** a boxcar pierced by what looks like bullet holes and parked on its own piece of track in the P.S. 1 courtyard, is a taciturn and plaintive piece; strong white light and haunting music stream out of it. Despite its minimalist formality, the metal oblong has an almost documentary cast, with its generalized allusions to boxcar tragedies from Nazi deportation to the death of Mexican immigrants locked in shipping containers. Ono takes her role as designated public mourner seriously, perhaps too much so. Still, it's hard to find fault with expressions of grief over collective death, especially now. Through May 31. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

MARIA MARSHALL
Fourth graders looking for love in a disco is the subject of Marshall's new film, "Puzzle Fit." The dance floor flashes and the Bee Gees croon "How Deep Is Your Love" as the girls giggle and grill the reluctant boys. The screen is divided into four sections that slide up, down, and across like a Rubik's Cube, replaying the same four scenes in different variations. It's the visual equivalent of the children's repetitive speech ("Can I be with Thomas? I want to be with Thomas. I'm with Thomas") but at twenty-three minutes the device starts to feel like a gimmick. Through May 4. (Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.)

Short List

GIUSEPPE PENONE
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through May 3.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

RICHARD BOSMAN
In his first New York solo show since 1994, Bosman, a star of the brief "Bad Painting" vogue, circa 1980, has stayed true to a gawky, juicily painted, strangely mild but beguiling expressionism. Subjects include Adirondack streams, deer, swimmers, canoes, and a trophy-packed hunting lodge, depicted in buttery light browns, deep greens and blues, black, and spumy white. Lush paint and stilted images seem numbingly stalemated at first, but patient looking uncovers the work's emotional keynote: the bashful ardor of an anxious, honest soul. To enjoy this art, simply make friends with it. Through May 23. (Elizabeth Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 212-463-9666.)

SYLVIA PLIMACK MANGOLD
The veteran New York painter continues her quixotic mission of faithfully rendering, in oils and in pencil and watercolor, the skeletal structures of two

trees—a pin oak and a maple—at her country home. With or without seasonal foliage, against soft blue or gray sky, trunks, branches, and twigs ramify in patterns as irrational and, by now, as familiar as the lines of a loved one's hand. The effortful pictures convey how hard it is to describe natural forms in which nature takes no pains to be orderly. Mangold's devotion to the arboreal sublime feels absurd and heroic. Through May 17. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

DEBORA WARNER
Two sound installations recorded primarily at Calumet Farms, in Lexington, Kentucky, the home of eight Derby winners, weave the screams, whinnies, nickers, snorts, and blustery blows of Thoroughbreds into two mood pieces, "Blood Horse" and "Dead Heat," that capture the horse at rest and on the track. Through May 3. (I-20, 529 W. 20th St. 212-645-1100.)

Short List

TONY FITZPATRICK
Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 212-741-3318.
Through May 3.

RICHARD TUTTLE
Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St.
212-999-7337. Through May 24.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

TARA DONOVAN
A beguiling show by a young sculptor who turns banal materials into wonders. Each of Donovan's projects begins with a single purchase—eighteen thousand pencils, two hundred gallons of Elmer's glue, or three million toothpicks. The newest work, "Haze," is a forty-foot-long wall made entirely of clear plastic drinking straws. Its bulging, diaphanous surface is full of little reflective eddies, as though these prosaic conduits for juice and soda were collectively willing themselves to metamorphose into something wild and useless, like sea foam. Through May 15. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 212-255-5599.)

Short List

MADONNA / STEVEN KLEIN
Deitch Projects Annex, 18 Wooster St.
212-343-7300. Through May 3.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

K. K. KOZIK
"Agh! What sort of man was Fragonard?" William Carlos Williams asked in his slyly erotic poem "Portrait of a Lady." The painter K. K. Kozik poses much the same lighthearted question in "Ashcan Rococo"—how can a pastoral imagination survive in the city? Her street-tough answer seems to lie in a brand of fantasy that bubbles out of the everyday: a nice girl sitting by a statue, purse at her feet, as if she's waiting for a boyfriend or a train; a back yard filled with junked paint cans with a lean-to playhouse of bright canvases. Through May 26. (Black & White, 483 Driggs Ave. 718-599-8775.)

GREG STONE AND MARK LOMBARDI
Interlinked exhibitions pair preparatory sketches by two suggestively dark artists, Greg Stone and the late Mark Lombardi. Lombardi maps shady corporate dealings in flowcharts that double as gorgeous constellations of painstakingly documented conspiracies. Stone creates dizzyingly complex geometrical drawings out of tar and other industrial materials. He says his abstractions depict the world through "dread-tinted glasses"; Lombardi, who committed suicide in 2000, shared this sensibility, one that mixes delicate expression with a bleak world view. Through May 19. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

VERA LUTTER
It's easy to become mesmerized by Lutter's massive camera-obscura photographs; the black-and-white images, of desolate factories and chilly abandoned warehouses, are all swaths of inky, bottomless blacks and smears of silvery white. Their sinister elegance is as discomfiting as it is mysterious. A picture of an empty airplane hangar is surprisingly organic; the ladders leading up to a Lufthansa jet are the same delicate, watery white as bird skeletons. Looking at them, it's hard not to construct a narrative to accompany a scene of a scrubby parking lot, as toneless and haunting as a crime-scene photo, or a vast, steaming industrial plant, the glow from whose white lights makes the building appear dusted in snow or bathed in the dim ebb of the northern lights. Through May 3. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

"OBJECTS THAT CREATE A POETIC RESPONSE"
This odd and enchanting show—one third of which is dedicated to found photographs by Fernand Léger and Pierre Jeanneret from the nineteen-thirties, assembled by the Surrealist artist Charlotte Perriand; another to those (from the same era) by the Czech artist Jindřich Štyrský; and the third to various anonymous snapshots by early American shutterbugs—is a testament to the offhanded magic of early photography as well as the medium's inherent accessibility. Perriand and company's photographs—of small, strange landscapes of shirred sand and inscrutable bubbles of glass held aloft against a sunny sky—are gently perplexing, but it's Štyrský's tiny, sepia-toned tableaux, all of inanimate objects (a doll, a globe, a plaster statue of a sweet, sad young woman) that prove the most unsettling and memorable; contemplating each one is like peering into a cabinet of wonders. Through May 2. (Banning, 64 N. Moore St. 212-966-4144.)

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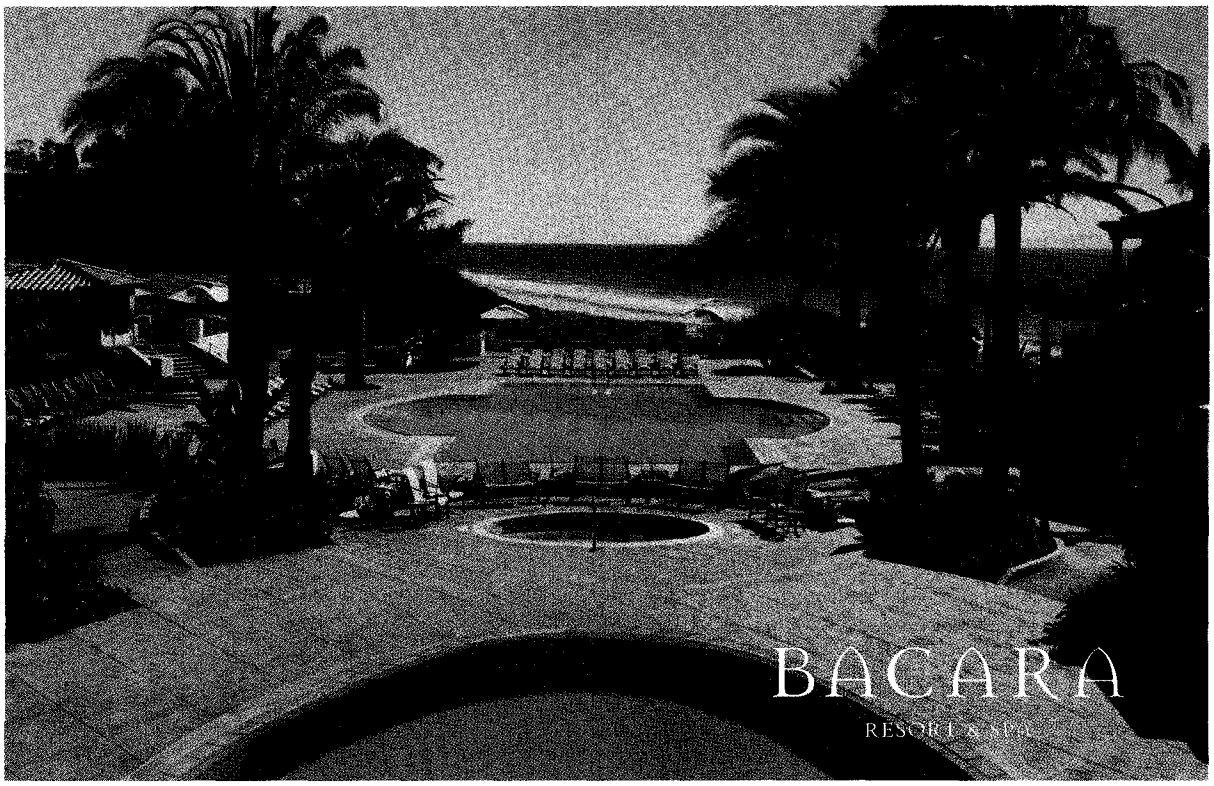

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Short List

WILLIAM KLEIN
Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 212-431-0292.
Through May 3.

MIGUEL RIO BRANCO
Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 212-505-5555.
Through May 8.

"BRONZEVILLE"
International Center of Photography,
1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0045. Through May 25.

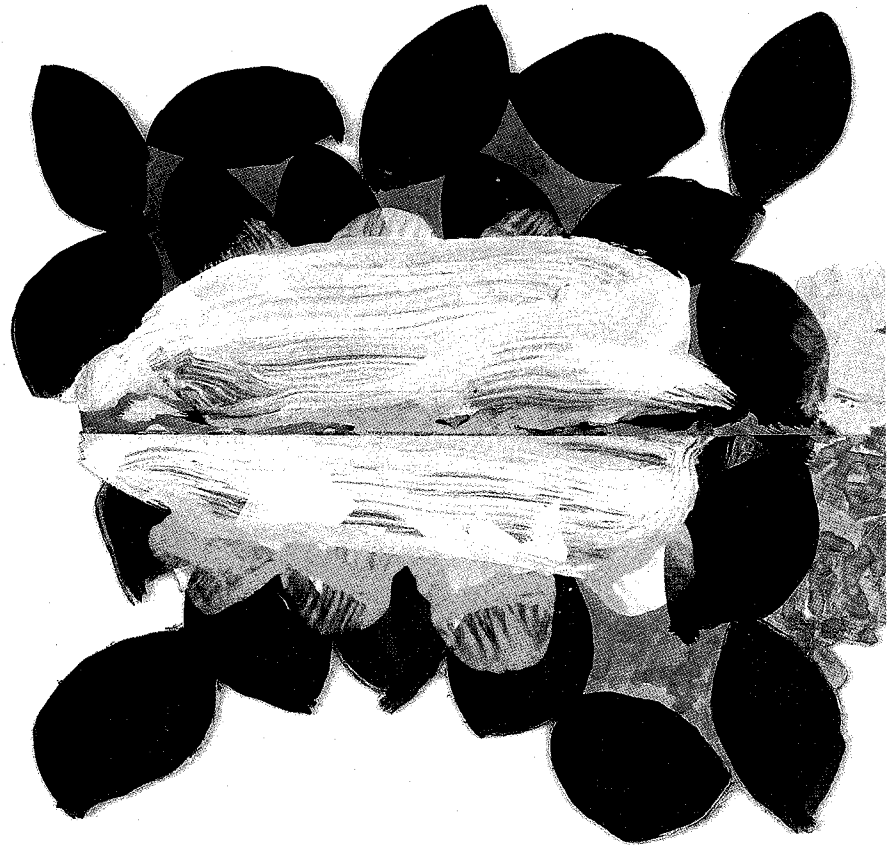
AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
April 30 at 2: "A Celebration of the English Country House" is the title of this sale, but its first session begins with a rich selection of Russian virtu highlighted by a silver-and-enamel jewel box made by Feodor Ruckert in Moscow, circa 1900; it continues with a variety of silver (including a George IV "Triton" soup tureen, cover, and stand from 1824). ♦ May 1 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: The sale concludes with two sessions of furniture, porcelain, china, sporting and maritime paintings, and decorative objects. ♦ May 2 at 10:15 A.M.: Another trio of sales, this time of prints, begins with works by such artists as Tamayo, Sloan, Prendergast ("Park Promenade," from 1901, expected to bring up to eighty thousand dollars), Cassatt, and Ensor. ♦ May 2 at 2: Some eighty-eight works by Picasso dominate the afternoon session, which also features prints by Miró and Toulouse-Lautrec. ♦ May 3 at 10:15 A.M.: The sale concludes with a selection of contemporary works by such artists as Close, Johns, Motherwell, and Stella. ♦ May 6 at 7: Renoir's garden portrait "Dans les Roses" (expected to bring up to thirty million dollars) is the highlight of the first of three sessions of Impressionist and modern art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
April 30 at 10 A.M.: A sale of musical instruments. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE
April 30 at 10 A.M.: Books, autographs, and photographs, in a sale that includes the Nicholas Schaffner collection of science fiction. ♦ April 30 at noon: Prints from the seventeenth century to the present, including works by Braque, Chagall, Warhol, Rauschenberg, and Marsh. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN
May 1 at 10:30 A.M.: "Rembrandt and His Followers," a showcase for portraits, nudes, and Biblical scenes by the Master (including a first-state print of "The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight"), along with prints by such artists as Picasso, Whistler, and Nolde. ♦ May 1 at 1: Prints by Dürer, Rembrandt, Piranesi, Cassatt, Redon, Lawrence, and many others. ♦ May 5 at 10:30 A.M.: Modernist posters, including political works by such artists as Heartfield and Shahn, along with a typically piquant selection of commercial advertisements. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)



THE LITTLE PAINTINGS THAT COULD *Richard Tuttle is in top form at Sperone Westwater, through May 24, with tiny, liquidy, split-level abstract paintings in amiable colors on eccentrically cut-out scraps of museum board and archival foam core. A perfunctory finishing nail pins each to the wall, a bit below eye level. The works effect miracles of scale, exploding into monumentality at close range and delivering more aesthetic delight than one can quite handle. How does Tuttle do it? It seems to do itself.—Peter Schjeldahl*

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Since Jonathan Miller's production of Stravinsky's **"The Rake's Progress,"** updated from Hogarthian times to postwar England, has such a bracing clarity, it's too bad that James Levine's accompaniment tends to wallow in its own luxuriousness. But it's excellent support for Paul Groves, the bright and forceful young tenor who carries off the role of Tom, the feckless rake, with considerable energy and style, and for Samuel Ramey, as Nick Shadow, whose dark and focussed sound is Groves' perfect opposite. Also with Emily Pulley (as Anne), Wendy White, and Dean Peterson. (April 30 at 8 and May 3 at 1:30.) ♦ **"Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg,"** with Solveig Kringelborn, Jill Grove, Johan Botha, Matthew Polenzani, James Morris (as Hans Sachs), Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, and René Pape; James Levine conducts. (May 1 at 6.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Elena Evseeva, Angela Maria Blasi, Frank Lopardo, and Mariusz Kwiecien; Marcello Viotti. (May 2 at 8.) ♦ **"La Traviata,"** with Andrea Rost, Marcus Haddock, and Lado Ataneli; Viotti. (May 3 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. These are the final performances of the season.)

BAM OPERA: "COSÌ FAN TUTTE"
"Così," the most intimate and emotionally complex of Mozart's operas, is the kind of piece that sprouts a thorn for every rose—perfect for the psychologically penetrating style of Jonathan Miller, who comes to Brooklyn to direct a new version of his 1995 production for Covent Garden. The cast includes Alexandra Deshorties, Rinat Shaham, Eric Cutler, Garry Magee, Helen Donath, and Thomas Allen; Robert Spano conducts the Brooklyn Philharmonic. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. April 30 and May 2 at 7:30 and May 4 at 3.)

ABSOLUTE: "THE BARBER OF SEVILLE"
Unlike his better-known father and brother, Kristjan Järvi has eschewed the symphony-orchestra business, making his mark on the avant-garde scene with his classical-rock-jazz ensemble, Absolute. He conducts Amy Trompetter's renowned production, in English, of Rossini's comedy, in which opera singers (including Chris Pedro Trakas and Julia Anne Wolf) share the stage with papier-mâché and shadow puppets in all shapes and sizes; Järvi will ditch Rossini's recitatives, with flamenco and pop-music riffs underlining the dialogue instead. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. May 1-3 at 8 and May 4 at 3. Through May 11.)

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS: "MARINA: A CAPTIVE SPIRIT"
Lauren Flanigan and Rosaland Elias lend their prestige to the première production of Deborah Drattell's chamber opera based on the life of the poet Marina Tsvetaeva; J. David Jackson conducts. (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. May 1-4 at 8.)

DICAPO OPERA: "PASSION"
Mark Flint conducts the first New York revival of Stephen Sondheim's 1994 musical, one of his most romantic scores. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-288-9438. May 2-3 at 8 and May 4 at 4.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Kurt Masur, returning to his old orchestra for a three-week stint, has generously put the spotlight on new music instead of on himself, offering a trio of premières. This week's program is a tribute to the Baroque spirit, including not only works by Bach and Handel ("Ode for St. Cecilia's Day," with Heidi Grant Murphy, Stanford Olsen, and the New York Choral Artists) but the world première of Lukas Foss's "Passacaglia, Bachanalia, Passacaglia," a subversive, playful fantasy based on fragments of Bach's Piano Concerto in D Minor. (May 1 at 7:30 and May 2-3 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

NEW YORK CHORAL SOCIETY
Offering Brahms's "A German Requiem," with the soprano Jane Thorngren and the baritone David Malis assisting. John Daly Goodwin conducts. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 1 at 8.)

BALTIMORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Yuri Temirkanov leads a program of Prokofiev (the First Violin Concerto, with Elisabeth Batiashvili) and Mahler (the Symphony No. 5). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 3 at 8.)

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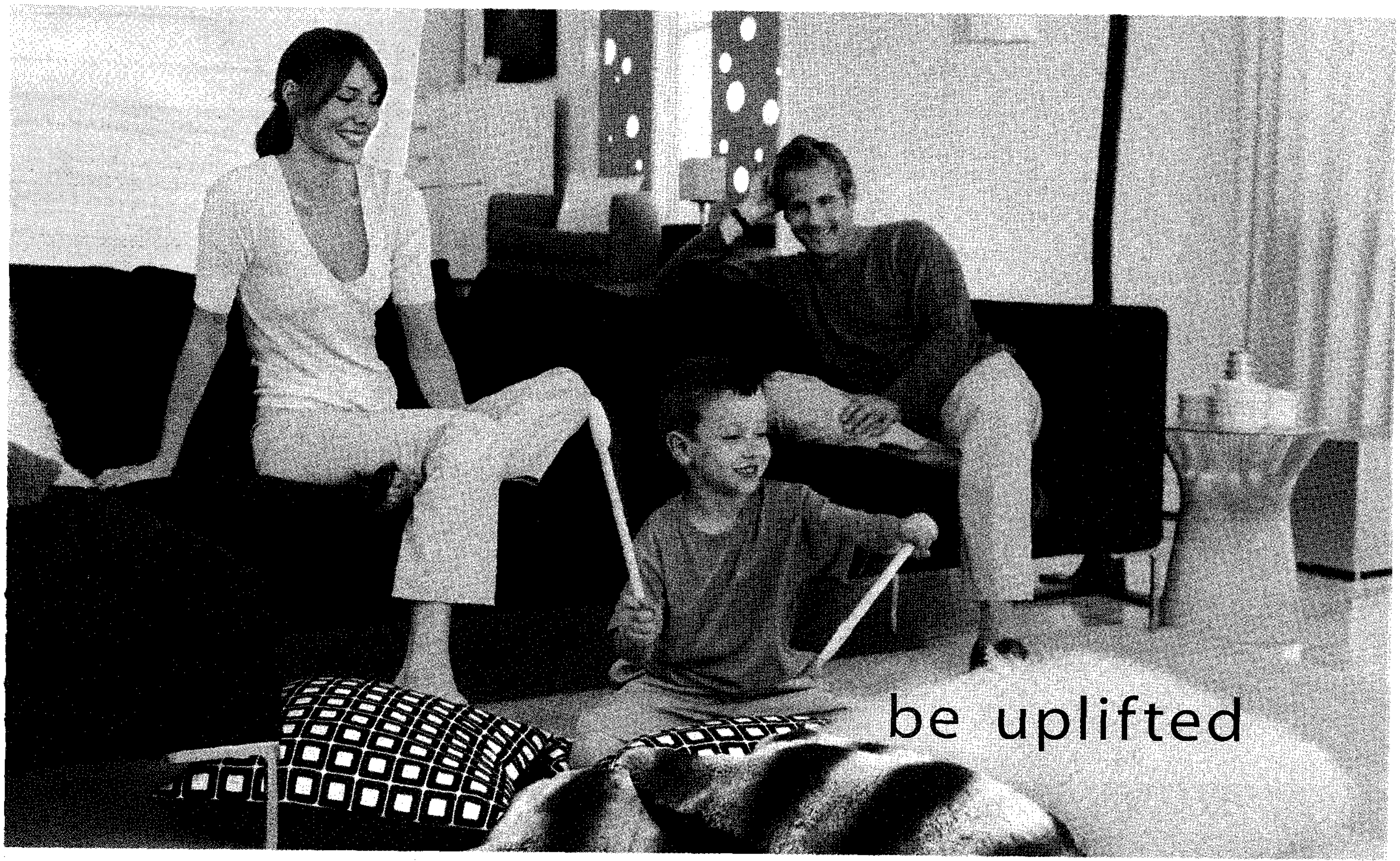

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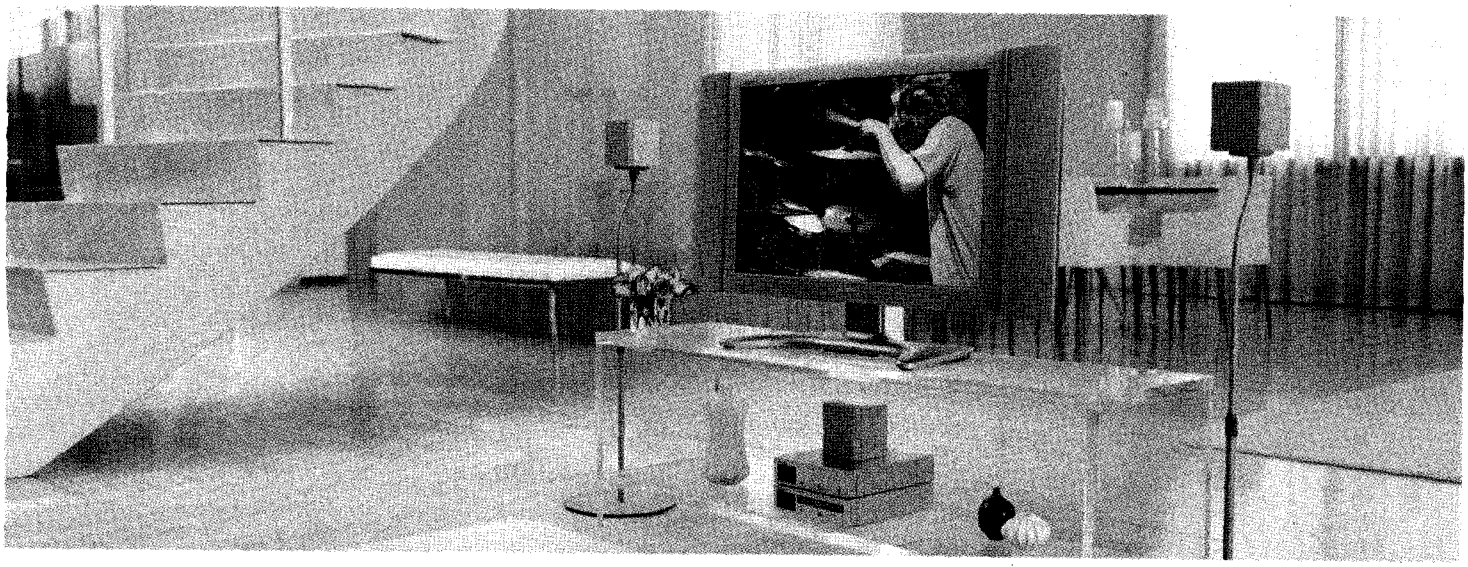

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NEW YORK'S ENSEMBLE FOR EARLY MUSIC
"Chapel Royal," a concert of motets, anthems, and theatre music for voices and instruments by Henry Purcell and two of his French contemporaries, Charpentier and Dumont, offered by Frederick Renz's early-music collective. (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, Lexington Ave. at 66th St. 212-280-0330. May 3 at 8.)

BAVARIAN RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Lorin Maazel decamps to Carnegie Hall to lead a series of Brahms concerts with this storied Munich ensemble, for which he serves as chief conductor. Two superb young artists, the violinist Julia Fischer and the cellist Han-Na Chang, are his guests for the Double Concerto; the program concludes with the Symphony No. 1 in C Minor. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 6 at 8.)

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR AND FAIRFIELD COUNTY CHORALE
Schumann's Requiem, one of the most compelling of his strange and discursive later works, will never be standard choral fare, but its fragile lyricism cries out for an occasional hearing. Johannes Somary, the director of both ensembles (and of the cathedral's orchestra), conducts it along with music by Bruckner (the Te Deum and the Ave Maria); the vocal soloists include Victoria Livengood and Kevin Deas. (Fifth Ave. at 51st St. 212-753-2261, ext. 274. May 6 at 8.)

RECITALS

AVALON STRING QUARTET
Juilliard's quartet-in-residence—a vivacious group with a light, bright sound—performs music by Beethoven (the Quartet in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131) and Augusta Read Thomas. (Alice Tully Hall. April 30 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

BASIL TWIST'S "SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE"
The puppeteer's setting of the ultra-Romantic masterpiece in a ten-thousand-gallon water tank, which made an aqua-balletic splash in 1999, returns to close Lincoln Center's Berlioz festivities. (Clark Studio Theatre, Rose Building. 212-721-6500. April 30 and May 1-2 at 8 and May 3-4 at 2 and 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
May 1-2 at 7:30: Two new faces at the floating music series, the violinist Sergej Krylov and the pianist Stefania Mormone, offer a concert of Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev (the Sonata in D Major), Falla, and Sarasate. ♦ May 3 at 7:30 and May 4 at 4: An all-Beethoven program (including the "Archduke" Trio), performed by the violinist Mark Peskanov and others. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

TRIO SOLISTI
The piano trio, with the clarinettist David Krakauer, performs music by Brahms and Paul Moravec (the première of "Tempest Fantasy," inspired by Shakespeare's play). (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 212-590-0333. May 2 at 6:30.)

CARNEGIE HALL RECITALS
May 2 at 8: Mitsuko Uchida, an exquisite interpreter of a wide range of Viennese classics, joins the Brentano String Quartet and others for an evening of Mozart, Webern, and Schoenberg ("Pierrot Lunaire," with the actress Barbara Sukowa). (Weill Recital Hall.) ♦ May 4 at 2: Louis Lortie, renowned for his Chopin playing, performs the composer's complete Études. (Isaac Stern Auditorium.) ♦ May 4 at 7:30: This season the Emerson String Quartet has been exploring the ways in which text and music can illuminate the themes of love and death; for the second of their Carnegie Hall concerts they've commissioned a string quartet from André Previn which, à la Schoenberg, features an added soprano part in its second movement (a setting of Christina Rossetti's poem "Remember," sung by Barbara Bonney). The program also includes quartets by Janáček and Mendelssohn and several Mendelssohn songs (with Previn at the piano). (Isaac Stern Auditorium.) (212-247-7800.)

FRIENDS & ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC
The tenor Paul Sperry is the featured artist for a concert of new and recent vocal works by Richard Hundley, Tom Cipullo, and Russell Platt (six settings of poems by Paul Muldoon), among others. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. May 2 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Music from the dawn of the Romantic period is the focus of the Society's latest concert, a program of Rossini, Glinka, Weber (the Trio for Flute, Cello, and Piano), and Mendelssohn. The violinist Ida Kavafian and the bassist Edgar Meyer are among the featured artists. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. May 2 at 8 and May 4 at 5.)

YING QUARTET: "NO BOUNDARIES"
The ensemble concludes its series at Symphony Space with a concert of folk-inspired pieces by Prokofiev (the rarely heard Quartet No. 2 in F Major) and Chen Yi (a new work featuring Guowei Wang, a master of the Chinese *erhu*). (Broadway at 95th St. 212-854-5400. May 2 at 8:30.)

BACH VARIATIONS: "MORIMUR"
The people who brought you the best-selling classical concept album "Morimur"—the violinist Christoph Poppen and the Hilliard Ensemble—have turned it into a touring act, re-creating the rapt spirituality of the ECM recording in the concert hall. The music is a radical reinterpretation of Bach's Partita in D Minor for Solo Violin (which he wrote soon after the death of his first wife), with the four singers performing Lutheran chorales that are supposedly embedded within the notes of the final Chaconne. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-721-6500. May 3 at 8.)

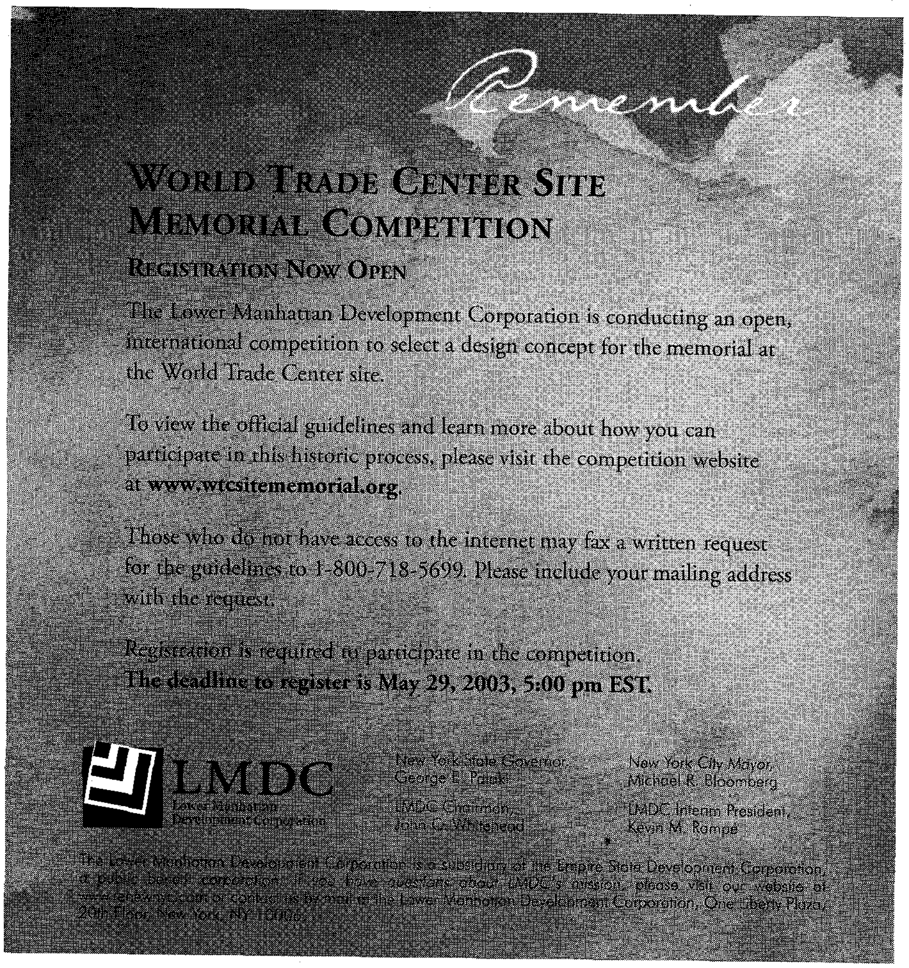
MATA 2003 FESTIVAL
A concert by Relâche, the Satie-inspired group from Philadelphia, kicks off the seventh annual downtown cavalcade of new music. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. 347-296-0190. May 6 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
May 1 at 7: Monique Truong offers passages from her novel, "The Book of Salt." (The Corner Bookstore, Madison Ave. at 93rd St. 212-831-3554.) ♦ May 1 at 7: Edward Hirsch, Alicia Ostriker, and Gerald Stern examine the impact of the Holocaust on American poetry with a reading of their own poems and poems by Holocaust survivors. (Museum of Jewish Heritage, 18 First Pl. For more information, call 212-945-0039.) ♦ May 1 at 7:30: Ben Greenman and Jon Raymond read from their fiction. (Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 4 at 3: The poet Amy Holman joins the novelists Peter Blauner and Heidi Julavits to read from new work. (Sunny's, 253 Conover St., Red Hook, Brooklyn. 718-625-8211.)

TALKS
May 1 at 6:30: The writer and historian Anthony Beevor discusses the Red Army's 1945 invasion of Berlin. (Wollman Auditorium, Cooper Union, 51 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 6 at 7: Margaret Atwood talks with Simon Schama about her new novel, "Oryx and Crake." (Low Memorial Library, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-854-9724.) ♦ May 6 at 7: The writer Klaus Kertess and the professor Kenneth Silver discuss the life and work of the sculptor Elie Nadelman. The curator Barbara Haskel will be the moderator. (Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. 212-570-3676.)

WALK
May 3 at 7:30 A.M.: The public-advocacy group Shorewalkers begins its annual Great Saunter, a thirty-two-mile, three-mile-per-hour circumnavigation of Manhattan, starting at the corner of Fulton and Water Sts. (For more information, visit www.shorewalkers.org or call 212-330-7686.)



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BOOK CURRENTS

Victoriana

Better known for his prodigious output as a biographer—his subjects have included Tolstoy, Jesus, and C. S. Lewis—A. N. Wilson has returned to social history. **THE VICTORIANS** (W. W. Norton), Wilson's chronicle of nineteenth-century Britain, looks at everything from the era's religious crises (the decline of Christian conviction) to its scientific advances (the emergence of evolutionary theory). One of the major themes is the growing problem of social stratification; the wealthy retreated into gated squares and the poor were left to live in what Wilson memorably describes as "a hard, brick-built, low-lying, gin-soaked world out of whose gaslit music halls and fogbound alleys mythologies developed."

Victorian fiction, past and present, takes up these mythologies. In Michel Faber's latest novel, **THE CRIMSON PETAL AND THE WHITE** (Harcourt), both the disease-ridden slums of factory workers and the prim precincts of the upper class play a role in the life of a wealthy perfume manufacturer whose daughter's governess (his former mistress) has a shady past as a prostitute and whose pious brother seeks redemption from his own lust by trying to save the soul of a fallen woman.

Still more poverty and dissolution permeate **THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT** (Modern Library), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's detective novel, which was first published in 1860. Jabez North, a foundling who was fished from the Sloshy River as a baby, leaves a trail of dead bodies behind him as he moves from the workhouse to the aristocracy. Though he gains his title, he can't escape his lowly past; as Braddon writes, he is still part of the "odoriferous neighborhood, where foul scents, foul sights, and fouler language abound."

—*Andrea Thompson*

RICHARD MCGUIRE

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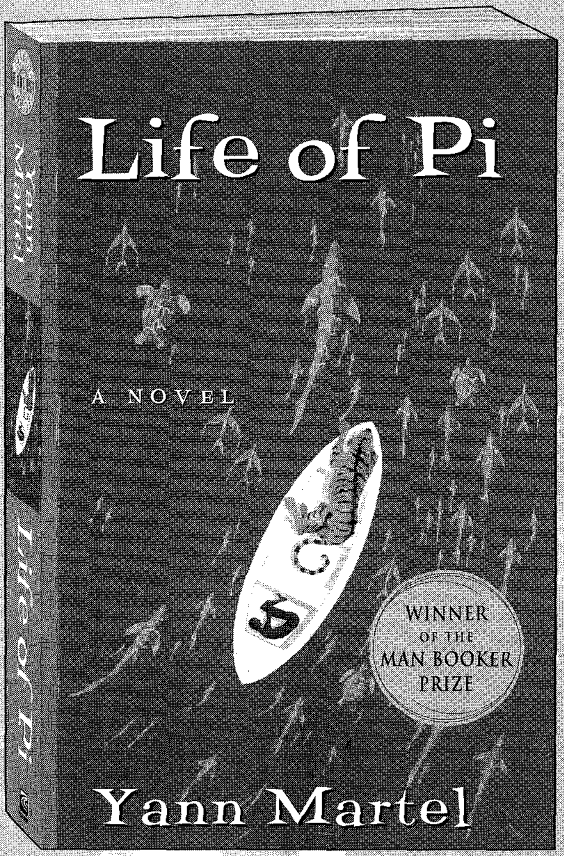

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MOVIES OPENING

AFGHAN STORIES
A documentary about life in Afghanistan before and after the fall of the Taliban, paired with "Dead Flowers," a short 9/11-themed film by Sean Penn. Opening April 30. (Pioneer.)

BLUE CAR
Karen Moncrieff wrote and directed this drama about the murky relationship between a troubled teen-ager (Agnes Bruckner) and her English teacher (David Strathairn). Opening May 2.

THE DANCER UPSTAIRS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 2.

THE LIZZIE MCGUIRE MOVIE
While on a class trip to Rome, an American teen-ager (Hilary Duff) is mistaken for an Italian pop star. Opening May 2.

OWNING MAHOWNY
Philip Seymour Hoffman plays an assistant bank manager and compulsive gambler who sets up an elaborate scam, in a drama directed by Richard Kwietniowski. With Minnie Driver and John Hurt. Opening May 2.

RENO: REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE
An adaptation of the comedian's one-woman show about the events of 9/11. Opening May 1. (Cinema Village.)

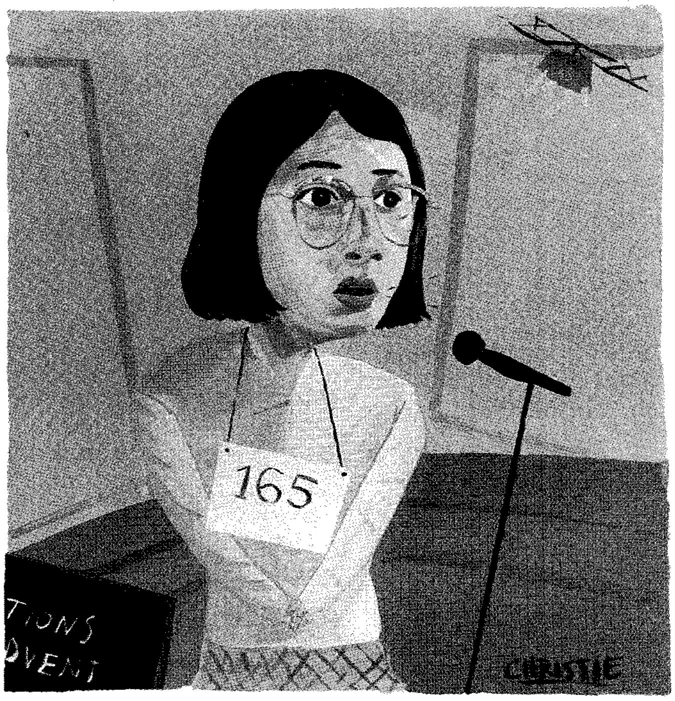
SPELLBOUND
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening April 30. (Film Forum.)

X2
The X-Men of Marvel Comics return in a sequel directed by Bryan Singer. The cast includes Hugh Jackman, Anna Paquin, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, and Halle Berry. Opening May 2.

FILM NOTES

ANGER MANAGEMENT
Another high-concept comedy brimming with lowbrow humor. Adam Sandler is a Milquetoast who is court-assigned to anger-management classes, and Jack Nicholson plays his unorthodox therapist, a human Looney Toon who has a field day with his charge's mild-mannered behavior. The script is funny at times, but the antics of the celebrity actors mostly drag where they should delight.—*Bruce Diones* (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

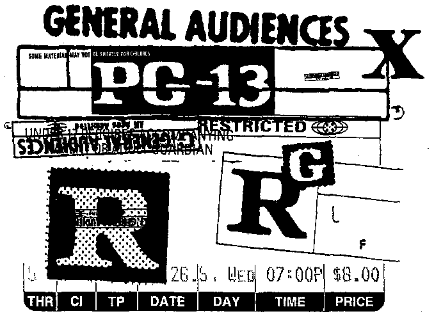
BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM
A crowd-pleasing British movie devoted to the radical idea that girls can play soccer and sprain their ankles. Jess (Parminder Nagra) is a Sikh who hides her love of the game from her conservative parents, while Jules (Keira Knightley) is a tomboy who defies her English mother. Both of them have a thing for their Irish coach, Joe (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers)—he of the wounded knee and the watery eyes. The movie is a hodgepodge: nicely barbed scenes with Jess's family bump against weird practice montages that play like sports-bra ads. What it all adds up to is multicultural empowerment for the pre-teen shin-guard crowd.—*Michael Agger* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)



Opening April 30 at Film Forum, Jeffrey Blitz's "Spellbound."

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

BULLETPROOF MONK
A by-the-numbers script about an immortal monk who must protect an ancient scroll is given some Hollywood gloss in the director Paul Hunter's martial-arts movie. Chow Yun-Fat is partnered with Seann William Scott, whose role as a pickpocket and



Hong Kong-film enthusiast gives him the opportunity to learn all the proper East-meets-West life lessons. Thin, to be sure, but there is fun to be had: the film is effortlessly generic, and Chow Yun-Fat glides through his scenes as if he's walking on water.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

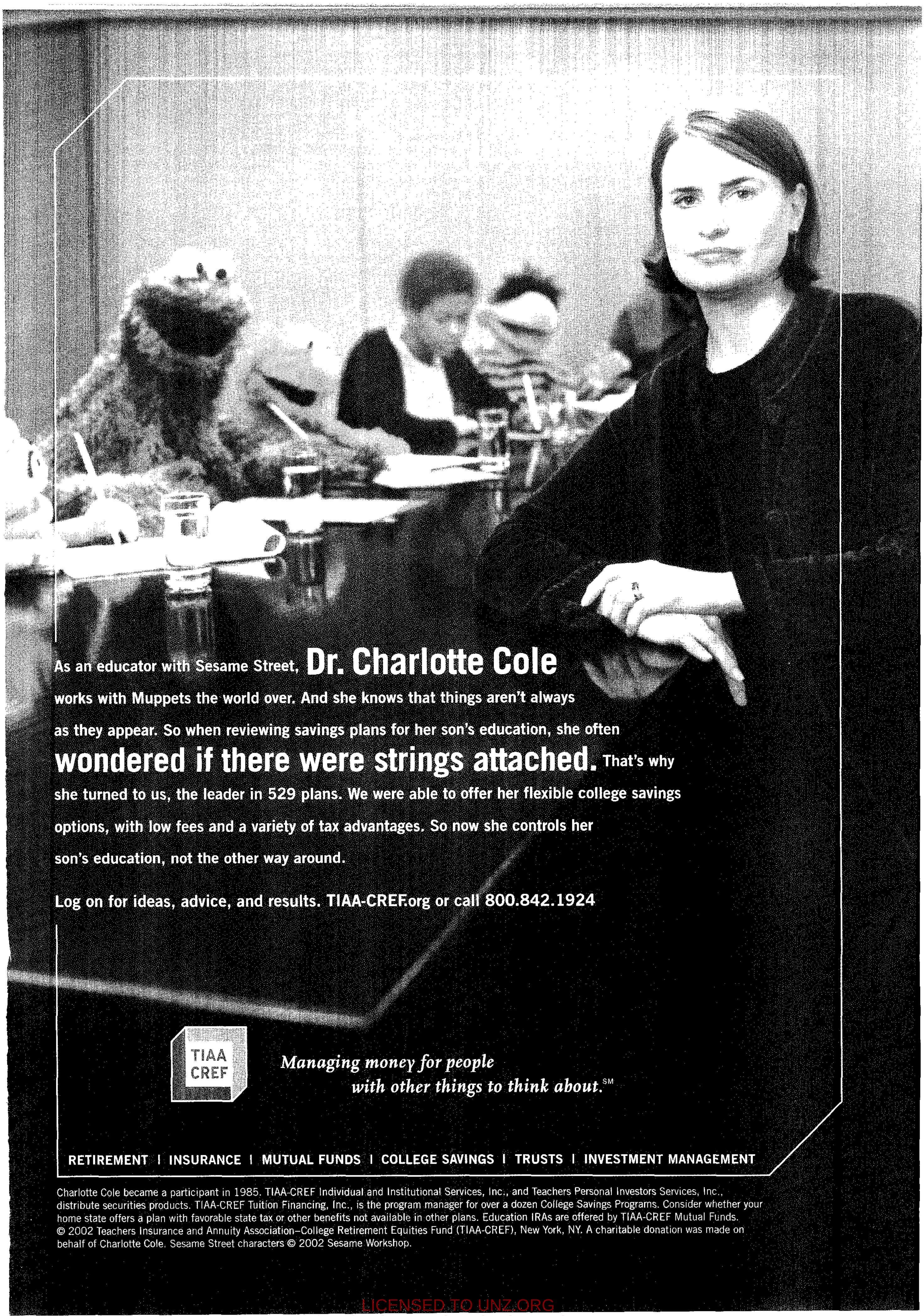
CHAMPION
The screenwriter Carl Foreman, who adapted Ring Lardner's boxing story for this 1949 drama, once said that his mother asked him why he had to kill off the "nice boy." Foreman fondly blamed Kirk Douglas for making people love Midge Kelly, a ruthless man who disposes of women and partners whenever they get in his way. Actually, Foreman's crafty script is to blame: it overexplains Kelly as a poor boy who sees the fight game as his only chance to escape poverty and get back at the father who abandoned him. But Douglas shows a prize killer instinct as an actor, bringing a vicious gusto to Kelly's scenes as a cad, a brute, and an exploiter. The role transformed him from a solid, polite character actor into a new kind of antisentimental star. Under Mark Robson's straight-ahead direction, Arthur Kennedy and Paul Stewart lend shrewd counterpoint as his brother and trainer, respectively; Ruth Roman, Marilyn Maxwell, and Lola Albright make his forgotten women memorable. Harry Gerstad won an Oscar for the propulsive editing.—*Michael Sragow* (Anthology Film Archives; May 3.)

CITY OF GOD
Just how far into your face can a movie get? This one has every intention of leaving you scalded and bruised. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it was directed by Fernando Meirelles, who tries every trick known to cameramen: freeze frames, whip pans, multiple dissolves, slow motion, double motion, any kind of motion. The object is to keep pace with his characters, the young and dispossessed of the Brazilian slums. The movie hastens roughly from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, as we watch the boys either die or grow old before their time. The result is a jolting ride, but such is the skill on show that we run the risk of being too exhilarated to notice every death; does the film convince in its plea for the forgotten poor, or are we encouraged to forget them as they fall? In Portuguese.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/20/03.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Empire 25.)

CONFIDENCE
A talky, fun grifter picture that may test your tolerance for Ed Burns, who stars, narrates, and even gets the girl. Surprisingly, Burns didn't direct; that honor went to James Foley ("Glengarry Glen Ross"), who signed up Dustin Hoffman to play a Mob boss with an aesthetic side. (He likes to give his strippers acting tips.) Paul Giamatti, Rachel Weisz, and Andy Garcia all provide able support, and the puzzle is a good one. Foley lets the sting play out without overloading it with hardboiled philosophy, and Burns is a convincing Mr. Cool.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

FELLINI: I'M A BORN LIAR
In this superb documentary fantasia, Fellini is seen directing an erotic scene from "Fellini Satyricon," shaping the performances of three beautiful young people with his hands, caressing the air as he croons instructions to first one and then another. His control of the scene is remarkable, but it makes one laugh, too, because in so much of the surrounding interview material, the director describes himself as a kind of medium through which a given movie passes, a mere craftsman in the service of reverie. His actual practice, as we can see from the many scenes of him at work, is consciously to shape every breath of air in his films, to dominate, terrify, seduce, and to dream and suffer for everyone. This Franco-Italian-Scottish co-production, directed by Damian Pettigrew, is an extraordinary piece of film in its own right. Pettigrew and his collaborators surround the interview material with a texture of film excerpts and freshly shot footage that has the density of one of the maestro's own movies, without the excess. In English and Italian.—*David Denby* (4/14/03) (Film Forum.)

THE GOOD THIEF
Nick Nolte plays Bob, half French, half American, whose days—and, more spectacularly, his nights—are spent in Nice. He is a chronic gambler and a heroin addict. He also used to be a thief, and Neil Jordan's movie shows him circling back to his old ways, as a sumptuous collection of paintings lures him into action—Bob is a bear, and his honey is fine art. With him are a bunch of henchmen, notably the smooth Raoul (Gérard Darmon); against him is a local detective (Tchéky Karyo), although the two of them are old, if not trusted, friends. The movie comes alive in the hero's presence: the camera frame is crammed with Nolte's shambling bulk, and we watch the wasting of his powers and his lunges at respectability. As a heist movie, however, this is a dud, the plot splintering badly in the middle. With Nolte to rely on, why does Jordan allow his attention to be distracted by lesser figures? Happily, the finale is a smooth run, as Bob and a young companion (Nutsa Kukhianidze) make hay at the tables of a casino. The material is heavily adapted from Jean-Pierre Melville's "Bob le Flambeur," with some patches of dialogue preserved in-



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tact.—*A.L.* (4/7/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

HAMMETT
In this zipless 1982 mystery pastiche, the moviemakers take the softest possible view of the pioneer detective writer Dashiell Hammett as a manly, tubercular loner. The story embroils Hammett (Frederic Forrest), an ex-Pinkerton man turned struggling novelist, in a search for a missing Chinese girl that reaches into San Francisco's ruling class. But mostly the director Wim Wenders beats Hammett's literary preoccupations into the asphalt. T. S. Eliot is his toilet fare, and while reading Robinson Jeffers he muses, "This guy can write." His old friend (Peter Boyle) questions Hammett's morality as an author, complaining that he's exploiting what Pinkerton taught him by selling it on the street in cheap magazines, as if pulp writing were prostitution. Forrest, with his wary stance and flickering eyes, is always on the brink of expressing Hammett's evasiveness, as well as his strength and savvy. But no one behind the camera focussed on his performance. Wenders may have been too busy deciding which magazines should fill a 1928 newsstand.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; May 4.)

HOLES
Louis Sachar's entertaining children's novel is given a snappy, faithful treatment by the director Andrew Davis and his boisterous cast (which includes Sigourney Weaver, Jon Voight, and Shia LaBeouf). The story, about a young Texan boy unjustly sent to a work camp for delinquents, happily retains all the magic realism of the book (the author wrote the screenplay). Flashbacks to the Old West, deadly lizards, family curses—Davis combines all of the movie's disparate pieces with enormous skill. It's an emotional tall tale, intelligent and wonderful.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

LAUREL CANYON
After the solemnities of "High Art," the director Lisa Cholodenko has turned to lighter matters: specifically, what to do if your mother is an unreconstructed hippie. Sam (Christian Bale) takes his fiancée, Alex (Kate Beckinsale), home to California to meet his mom, Jane (Frances McDormand), a record producer whose walls of photographs bear testament to a life misspent in rock. She is all the family that Sam has but far more than he wants, especially since Jane's idea of quality time is to come within an inch of seducing her son's girlfriend while bringing a shameless young rock star (Alessandro Nivola) along for the ride. The movie has poise and a lightly perspiring sexiness, but also an uncertain sense of humor, and you end up rooting for the squares—especially Sam and his colleague Sara (Natascha McElhone), who have more fun in the front of a Volvo than seems either practical or legal. The soundtrack is full of ersatz British pop, so tuneless and squally that it could almost be the real thing.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

LILYA 4-EVER
Lilya (Oksana Akinshina) is a chirpy girl of sixteen, sunk in a stagnant backwater of what used to be the Soviet Union. She is, to all intents and purposes, orphaned when her witch of a mother abandons her to seek a life in America. Lilya starts with practically nothing and goes downhill from there, winding up selling her body to the vulpine patrons of a bar; what redeems the movie—what renders a squalid experience quite sacred in its intensity—is the vehemence with which the writer and director, Lukas Moodysson, asks whether his heroine has also sold her soul. The caustic portrait that he paints of his native Sweden, to which the deluded Lilya is transported in her quest for a future, has brought him both outrage and acclaim; what is beyond doubt is the brio of his storytelling and the branding of the girl's misfortune onto our hearts and nerves. With Artiom Bogucharski as the artless dodger who becomes her only friend. In German, Swedish, English, and Russian.—*A.L.* (4/21 & 28/03) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST
A huge Finn (Markku Peltola), unnamed and undemonstrative, is beaten up and left for dead. Knowing almost nothing of his former life, he begins a new one—living in a converted storage container on the Helsinki waterfront, befriending a dog, and cooking regrettable meals for a quiet blonde (Kati Outinen) from the Salvation Army. The director is Aki Kaurismäki, and even by his rigorous standards this is laconic fare—long, peaceful silences broken by tentative conversation and the steady puff of cigarettes. The result is oddly affecting: you come to feel not just sympathy for the hero, with his bandaged brow and utter want of self-pity, but even a mild envy for his uncluttered existence. In Finnish.—*A.L.* (4/7/03) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

A MIGHTY WIND
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.)

PURPLE RAIN
The "8 Mile" of its day, Prince's 1984 semiautobiographical film début was both hubristic and humble: it cast him as the latest and greatest in a long line of brooding, sensual antiheroes, somehow twining together strands of Elvis Presley, James Dean, and Jimi Hendrix; yet, for all of Prince's onscreen arrogance and pretension, the movie follows an extremely satisfying and traditional story arc. The Kid, Prince's alter ego, lives in Minneapolis with his mixed-up interracial family; his abusive father (Clarence Williams III) can't beat his chemical and creative demons, and his loving mother (Olga Karlatos) produces endless Oedipal confusion. How does the Kid deal with the mounting pressure? By riding his motorcycle, squabbling with his bandmates, courting a fetching if talentless young singer (Apollonia Kotero), and, of course, taking to the stage, where he delivers a scorching set of original songs that includes "Let's Go Crazy," "I Would Die 4 U," and the tidal title

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track. With Morris Day and the Time as the more superficial and often more enjoyable rival band.—*Ben Greenman* (Sunshine Cinema; May 2-3.)

RAISING VICTOR VARGAS
A lovely small-scale comedy about the commonplace mating rituals in a Dominican section of Manhattan. It's summer, and everyone is on the prowl, but the neighborhood is friendly and peaceful; chickens run through the alleys, and small gardens pop up here and there among the projects. The boys act cocky even when they're unsure of themselves, and the girls pretend they don't need boys. Nothing very important happens, but, moment by moment, the movie is alive with the play of gestures and glances, the faces of aggression and withdrawal. Victor Rasuk is well cast as the good-looking local Casanova, perhaps eighteen years old, and Judy Marte is the wary young beauty who gets him to change his style. The writer-director Peter Sollett stays close to the actors, all nonprofessionals, and they greet the camera with a modest but exploratory willingness.—*D.D.* (3/31/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, and Sunshine Cinema.)

SPELLBOUND
Jeffrey Blitz's charming documentary follows eight elementary students competing in the 1999 National Spelling Bee; he rode the bus to school with them, interviewed their teachers, checked out their rooms, and, in one case, listened while a kid talked like a robot. The sample of children is appropriately diverse—in region, in race, in the intensity of their preparations. Some of their parents see the spelling bee as representing the immigrant dream of America in miniature while others seem amazed at the intensity of their nerdy offspring. The competitions are tense, and Blitz cobbles together a series of heartbreaking reaction shots of errant spellers. His direction shows a clever, occasionally flippant, selection of detail—the dog-eared unabridged dictionaries, the congratulatory sign posted outside Hooters, the prodigy who signs his autographs "Trust in Jesus."—*M.A.* (Film Forum.)

XX/XY
Austin Chick tries to serve up something frisky and French in his début film, which chronicles, in claustrophobic detail, the love triangle between two bohemian college girls and a New York City artist (Mark Ruffalo). It's nice to see Ruffalo back on the screen (he made this film before brain surgery kept him out of acting for almost two years), and he plays much the same sort of lost boy he did in "You Can Count on Me," but without any of that character's redeeming qualities and without a script by Kenneth Lonergan. The conversations feel hackneyed and precious, and Ruffalo outclasses the other actors, who are trying to pin him down.—*M.A.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

BETTER LUCK TOMORROW
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 34th Street Theatre.

IDENTITY
Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY
Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

MAROONED IN IRAQ
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

PEOPLE I KNOW
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.

THE PIANIST (1/13/03)
Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.

THE REAL CANCUN
84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.

WINGED MIGRATION
Paris.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).

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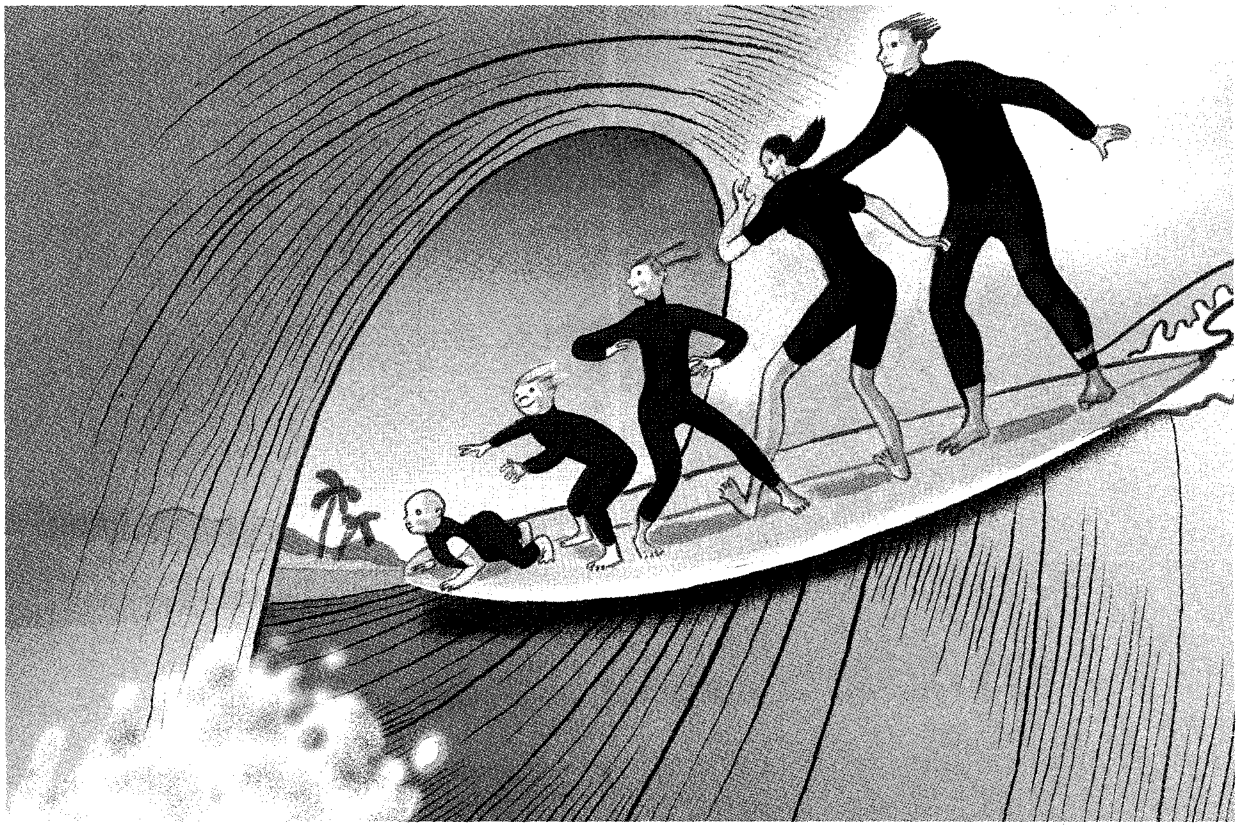
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (212-334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through May 11: "Home and Away," pairings of an international film and an American film by the same director. May 3 at 2: "The Mystery of Kaspar Hauser" (1975, Werner Herzog; in German). ♦ May 3 at 4:15: "Stroszek" (1977, Herzog; in English and German). ♦ May 4 at 2: "The American Friend" (1977, Wim Wenders; in English and German). ♦ May 4 at 4:30: "Hammett" (†). ♦ Repertory nights. May 3-4 at 6:30: "Ikiru" (1952, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese).



The surfing documentary "Step Into Liquid" screens at the Tribeca Film Festival, which begins May 3.

ALISON SEIFFER

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—The Richard Schwarz Thalia Film Festival. May 1 at 7 and May 2 and May 4 at 9: "Made in USA" (1966, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ May 1 at 9, May 2 at 7, May 3 at 9:30, and May 4 at 7: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ May 3 at 5: "Champion" (†). ♦ May 3 at 7 and May 4 at 4: "Christ in Concrete" (1949, Edward Dmytryk).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—A retrospective of the Indian director Adoor Gopalakrishnan. All films are in Malayalam. May 1 at 7:30: "Shadow Kill" (2002). ♦ May 2 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Walls" (1990). ♦ May 3 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Man of the Story" (1996). ♦ May 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Servile" (1994). ♦ The films of Mario Bava. May 5 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Five Dolls for an August Moon" (1970; in Italian). ♦ May 5 at 7: "Kidnapped" (1974; in Italian). ♦ Films featuring the cinematography of Conrad Hall. May 6 at 4:20, 7, and 9:30: "In Cold Blood" (1967, Richard Brooks).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through May 7: Matthew Barney's "Cremaster" films. April 30-May 3 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Cremaster 3" (2002). ♦ A Cremaster marathon. May 4 at 1 and 8:45: "Cremaster 4" (1994) and "Cremaster 5" (1997). ♦ May 4 at 3: "Cremaster 1" (1995) and "Cremaster 2" (1999). ♦ May 4 at 5:20: "Cremaster 3" (2002). ♦ May 5-6 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Cremaster 4" (1994) and "Cremaster 5" (1997).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-315-6160)—Through May 20: The films of William Klein. May 6 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Far from Vietnam" (1967) and "In & Out of Fashion" (1993; in French and English).

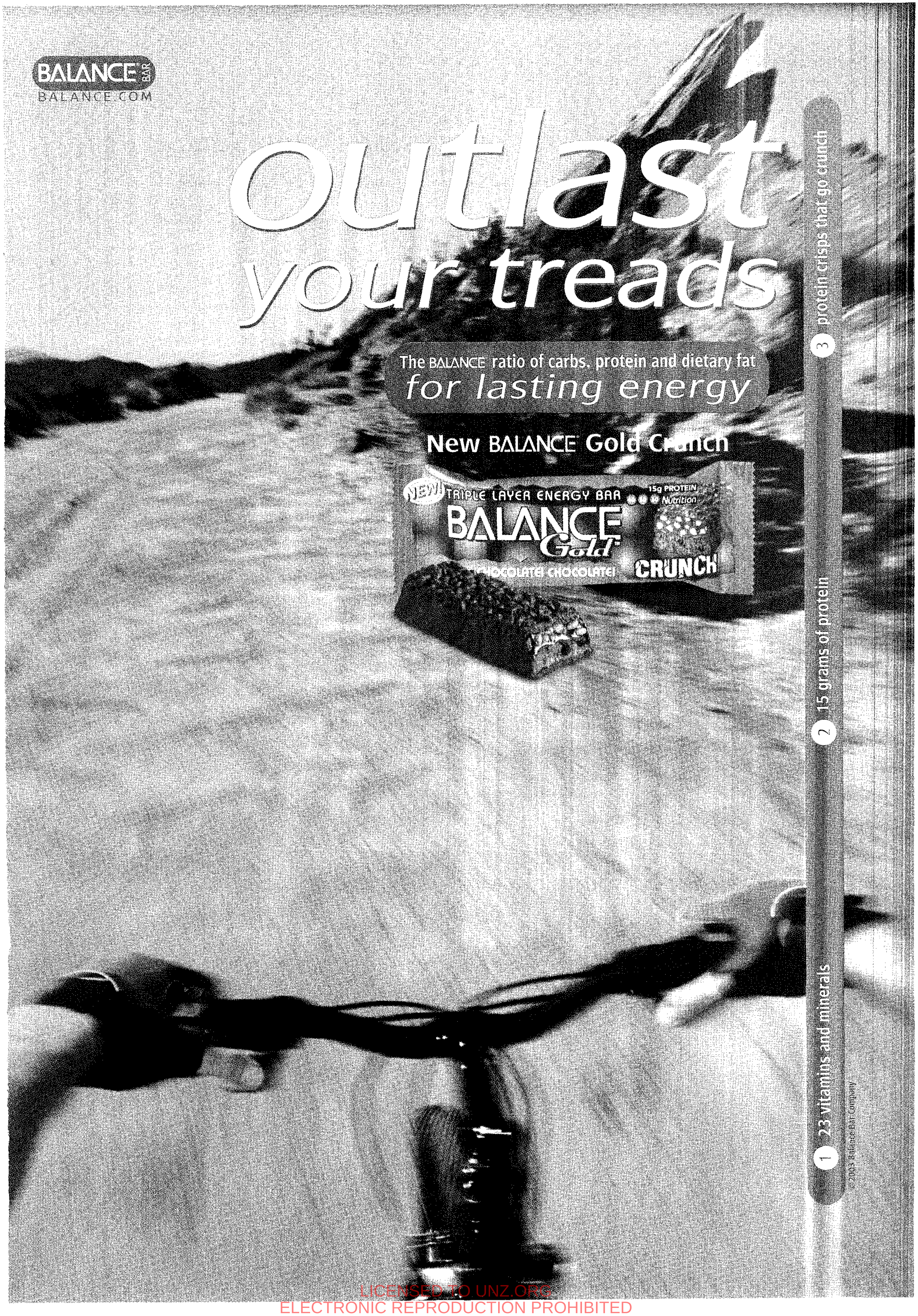
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through May 2: "Sundance at MOMA." May 1 at 2: "Golan" (2003, Amit Goren; in Hebrew). ♦ May 1 at 4: "Lost Boys of Sudan" (2003, Megan Mylan; in Dinka and English). ♦ May 1 at 6 and May 2 at 2: "Flute Player" (2003, Jocelyn Glatzer; in Khmer and English). ♦ May 2 at 3:15: "Seeing Is Believing" (2001, Katerina Cizek and Peter Wintonick) and "Behind the Labels" (2002, Tia Lessin). ♦ May 2 at 5: "Stealing the Fire" (2001, John Friedman and Eric Nadler; in English and German). ♦ Through May 25: Films supported by the Hubert Bals Fund. May 2 at 7: "The Deserted Station" (2002, Ali-Reza Raissian; in Farsi). ♦ May 2 at 9:15: "Violet Perfume" (2000, Maryse Sistach; in Spanish). ♦ May 3 at 2: "The Postman" (1994, He Jianjun; in Mandarin). ♦ May 3 at 4:15: "Killed by Lightning" (2002, Yevgeni Yufit; in Russian). ♦ May 3 at 6: "The Servant's Shirt" (1998, Mani Kaul; in Bengali). ♦ May 3 at 8:15: "The Price of Forgiveness" (2001, Mansour Sora Wade; in Wolof). ♦ May 4 at 1: "Shadow Kill" (2002, Adoor Gopalakrishnan; in Malayalam). ♦ May 4 at 3: "Silences of the Palace" (1994, Moufida Tlati; in Arabic). ♦ May 5-7: The Dusty Film Festival, student films from this year's graduates of the School of Visual Arts.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. May 2-3: "Purple Rain" (†).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through May 4: A John Cassavetes retrospective. May 3 at 1 and May 4 at 6:30: "A Woman Under the Influence" (1974). ♦ May 3 at 3:45 and May 4 at 9:15: "Opening Night" (1977). ♦ May 3 at 6:45 and May 4 at 1: "Minnie and Moskowitz" (1971). ♦ May 3 at 9:30 and May 4 at 3:45: "Gloria" (1980).

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
Box-office headquarters, 387 Greenwich St. (866-265-8499)—May 3-11: Feature-film premières, documentaries, special presentations, and more. See http://www.tribecafilmfestival.org for details.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through May 29: "Films from Along the Silk Road." The movies are listed with their country of origin. May 2 at 2 and May 3 at 9: "Orator" (2000, Yusup Razikov; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 2 at 4 and May 4 at 6:30: "Boys in the Sky" (2002, Zoulfikar Musakov; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 2 at 6:15: "Without Fear" (1972, Ali Khamraev; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 2 at 9: "Last Holiday" (1996, Amir Karakulov; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 3 at 1:30, May 4 at 4, and May 6 at 3:10: "Man Follows Birds" (1975, Khamraev; Uzbekistan). ♦ May 3 at 4: "The Daughter-In-Law" (1972, Khodjakuli Narliev; Turkmenistan). ♦ May 3 at 6:30: "Kairat" (1991, Darezhan Omirbaev; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 4 at 1:30: "The Adopted Son" (1998, Aktan Abdikalikov; Kyrgyzstan). ♦ May 4 at 9: "Don't Cry" (2003, Karakulov; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 6 at 1 and 8:45: "The Swing" (1993, Abdikalikov; Kazakhstan). ♦ May 6 at 5: "The Fall of Otrar" (1990, Ardak Amirkulov; Kazakhstan).



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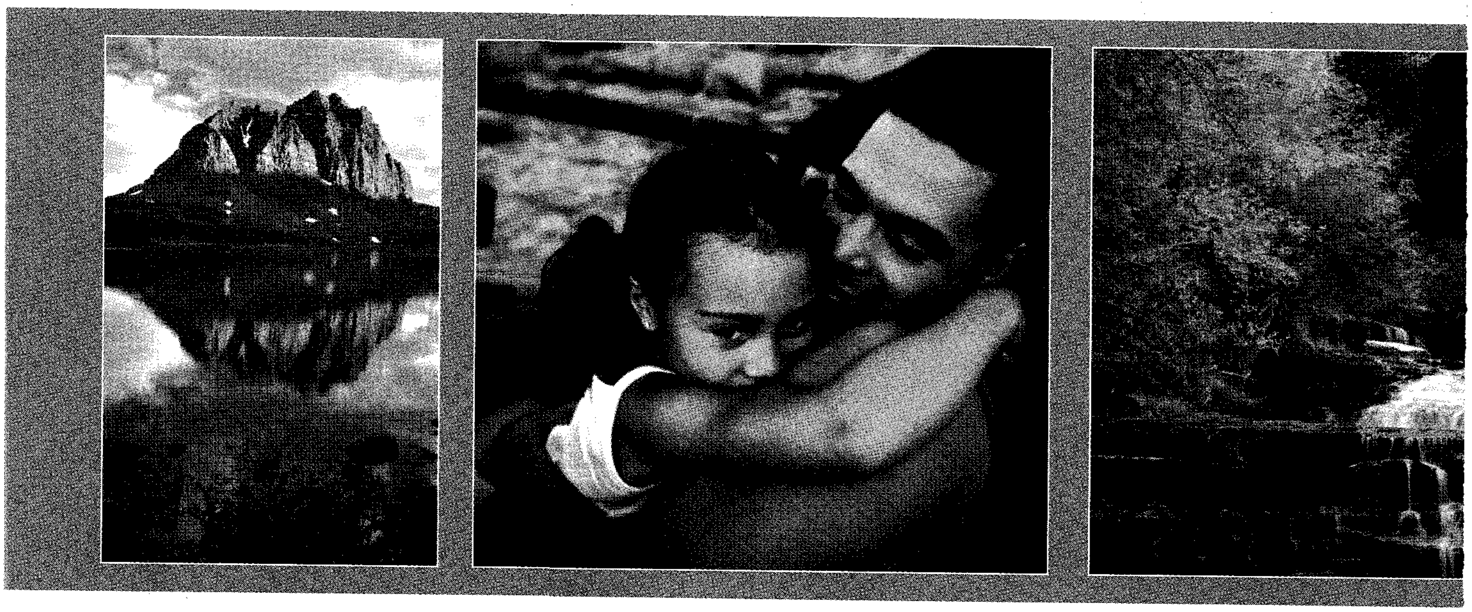

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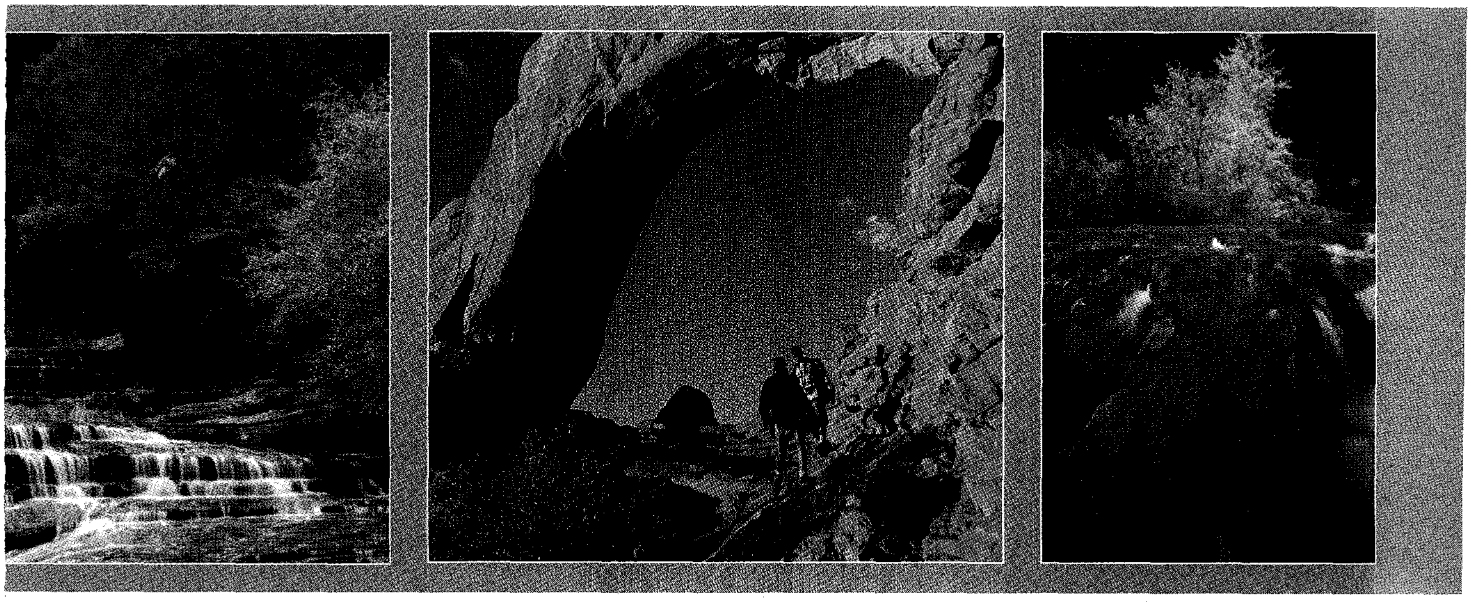

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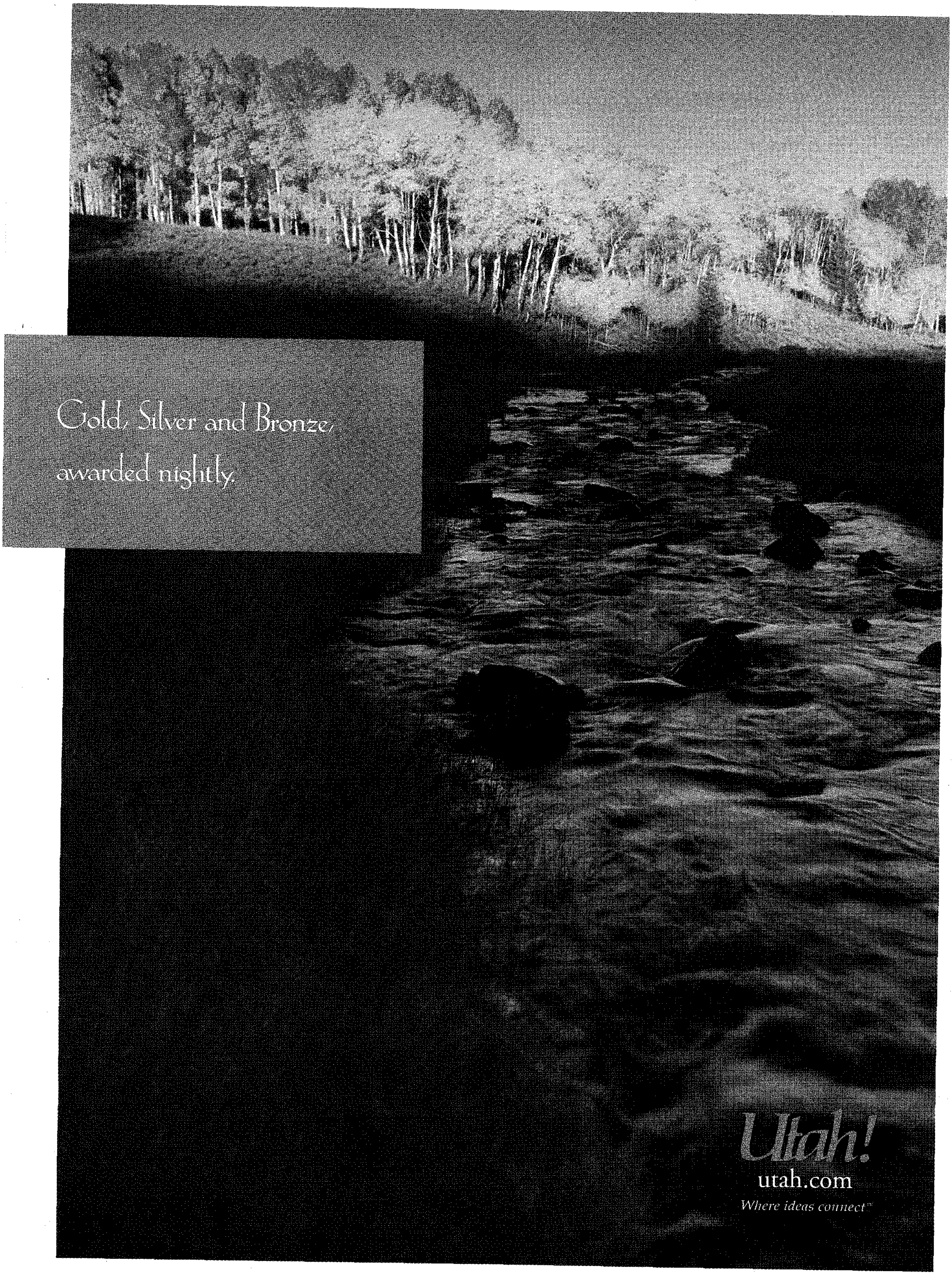
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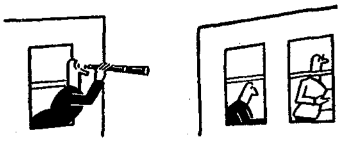
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DOG BITES MAN



The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is the birthplace of Gertrude Stein, the Duchess of Windsor, and Andy Warhol. Pennsylvania's largest urban conglomeration, Philadelphia, is known as the City of Brotherly Love, and it also gave its name to the movie for which Tom Hanks, playing a gay lawyer, won his first Oscar. A stone's throw away, in neighboring Camden, Walt Whitman, the poet of democracy and manly adhesiveness, spent his golden years. All of that is well and good. But let's not get any funny ideas.

Pennsylvania's junior United States Senator is Rick Santorum, who has lately earned himself a spot of trouble by talking about sex. Senator Santorum is widely regarded, not least by himself, as an up-and-comer. At forty-four years of age, he already holds the exalted title of chairman of the Senate Republican Conference. This makes him the No. 3 man in the Republican leadership, just behind the Majority Leader, Bill Frist, and the Assistant Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell. According to an official press release, which was headed "Statement of U.S. Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) regarding misleading Associated Press story," and which was put out last Tuesday, "Senator Santorum recently sat down for an interview with the Associated Press with an understanding that a profile piece would be published regarding his 8-year tenure in the Senate." The implication was that the Senator had been sandbagged, but the profile in question had come out a few days earlier, and at first glance it was hard to see why Santorum was complaining about it. Its first sentence—

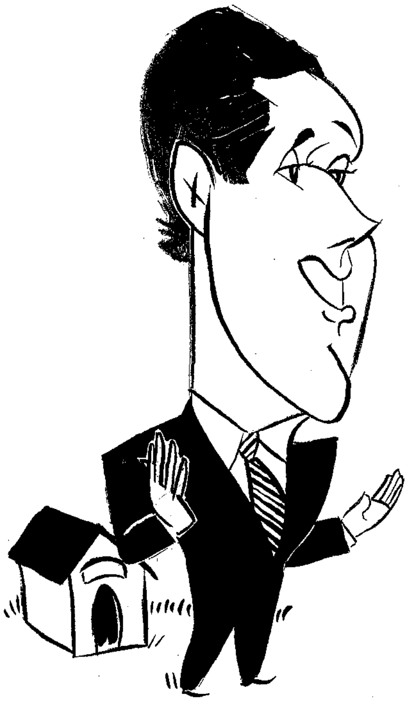
> Sen. Rick Santorum, a self-described compassionate conservative intent on climbing the Republican leadership ladder, filters all politics and policy through one guiding principle: what is best for the American family

—was nearly identical to the first sentence of the "About the Chairman" section of the Senate Republican Conference's Web site:

> Since joining the United States Senate in 1995, Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania has emerged as one of the most effective defenders of the American family.

Nothing misleading in either of those, assuming your definition of the American family is strictly limited to a husband, a wife, and as many children as they can produce without interference from artificial means of contraception. The supposedly misleading bit started a couple of paragraphs further into the A.P. story, when the reporter, Lara Jakes Jordan, quoted the Senator—who was discussing a challenge to the constitutionality of Texas's sodomy law, currently before the Supreme Court—as saying that if the Court O.K.'s gay sex at home "then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. You have the right to anything."

A flap ensued. Santorum was taken to task—by Democratic politicians, by newspaper editorialists in cosmopolitan cities, and by gay organizations, including the patient, Job-like Log Cabin Republicans. He had his defenders, too. Some agreed with Kenneth Connor, of the Family Research Council, who said, "I think the Senator's remarks are right on the mark." Others protested that those remarks had been taken out of context. Still others, in the spirit of loving the sinner while taking no position on the sin, drew attention to Santorum's inner goodness. Majority Leader Frist called him "a man of tremendous integrity, a deep faith,



Senator Rick Santorum

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

someone who believes all men are created equal." (No, wait—that's what Santorum said about Trent Lott four months ago. What Frist said last week was "Rick is a consistent voice for inclusion and compassion in the Republican Party and in the Senate.") As for President Bush, his press secretary, Ari Fleischer, said on Wednesday that "the President typically never does comment on anything involving a Supreme Court case, a Supreme Court ruling, or a Supreme Court finding—typically." (When a reporter made reference to the fact that the President had given a speech expressly to comment on an affirmative-action case now before the Court, Fleischer replied that that was why he had stressed the word "typically.") By Friday, though, Fleischer was saying that Bush "has confidence in Senator Santorum," whom he thinks is "an inclusive man." People's sexuality, Fleischer added airily, is "not a matter the President concerns himself with."

A few hours after the original story moved on the wire, the A.P., no doubt stung by charges that it had quoted Santorum unfairly, made public lengthy excerpts from a transcription of the interview. The excerpts have bounced around the Internet, but they have not received the sustained attention that, as a sample of the quality of mind of one of the nation's most powerful legislators, they deserve. Excerpts from the excerpts:

MS. JORDAN: I mean, should we outlaw homosexuality?

MR. SANTORUM: I have no problem with homosexuality. I have a problem with homosexual acts. As I would with acts of other, what I would consider to be, acts outside of traditional heterosexual relationships. And that includes a variety of different acts, not just homosexual. I have nothing, absolutely nothing against anyone who's homosexual. If that's their orientation, then I accept that. And I have no problem with someone who has other orientations. The question is, do you act upon those orientations? So it's not the person, it's the person's actions. And you have to separate the person from their actions.

MS. JORDAN: O.K., without being too gory or graphic, so if somebody is homosexual, you would argue that they should not have sex?

MR. SANTORUM: We have laws in states, like the one at the Supreme Court right now, that have sodomy laws and they were there for a purpose. Because, again, I would argue, they undermine the basic tenets of our society and the family. And if the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. You have the right to anything. Does that undermine the fabric of our society? I would argue yes, it does. It all comes from, I would argue, this right to privacy that doesn't exist in my opinion in the United States Constitution....

In every society, the definition of marriage has not ever to my knowledge included homosexuality. That's not to pick on homosexuality. It's not, you know, man on child, man on dog, or whatever the case may be. It is one thing. And when you destroy that you have a dramatic impact on the quality—

MS. JORDAN: I'm sorry, I didn't think I was going to talk about "man on dog" with a United States Senator. It's sort of freaking me out.

MR. SANTORUM: And that's sort of where we are in today's world, unfortunately. The idea is that the state doesn't have rights to limit individuals' wants and passions. I disagree with that. I think we absolutely have rights because there are consequences to letting people live out whatever wants or passions they desire. And we're seeing it in our society.

MS. JORDAN: Sorry, I just never expected to talk about that when I came over here to interview you.

One might point out, a little wearily, that bigamy and polygamy, like other forms of marriage, are matters of contract law, not of private consensual sex. Or that Santorum's logic would dictate the criminalization of adultery as well as homosexuality, with potentially devastating consequences for both Houses of Congress. Or that to say that homosexuality is "no problem" but actually doing anything homosexual should be punishable by law is like saying that freedom of conscience includes the right to think heretical thoughts but not to utter them. Or that Santorum believes that while individuals have no "right to consensual sex within the home" the state does have "rights to limit individuals' wants and passions," which is to say their feelings. Or that—oh, never mind. It's probably unfair to parse Santorum's pronouncements as if they were products of ratiocination. No wonder, though, that liberal Democrats, moderate Republicans, and other non-hard-right types are increasingly nostalgic for the likes of Ronald Reagan (who delivered a forceful but unfortunately not fatal blow to Republican homophobia when he opposed a referendum that would have barred homosexuals from teaching in California's public schools) and Barry Goldwater (whose suspicion of Big Government did not include an opt-out provision for bedrooms). Those were the good old days, even if we didn't know it at the time.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

AT THE MUSEUMS
FIRST CITIES

News of the catastrophic looting of the National Museum in Baghdad coincided, in the most heartrending way, with the countdown to a long-planned exhibition, opening on May 8th at the Metropolitan Museum, of Early Bronze Age art from the region that now includes Iraq. Called "Art of the First Cities," the exhibition covers a wide area, all the way from the Eastern Mediterranean to Pakistan, but its focal point is Mesopotamia, the "land between the rivers" (the Tigris and the Euphrates), where, by the third millennium B.C., the Sumerian people had invented cities, writing, irrigation farming, monumental architecture, government by law, and countless other benefactions of what we call civilization. While the looters were raping the Baghdad museum's peerless collection of Sumerian gold jewelry, stone and ivory and metal sculptures, ancient cuneiform seals, and God knows what else—the losses will take weeks to assess—the Met's curators were waiting anxiously for the arrival of promised loans of similar material from forty-eight other museums around the world. Nothing was coming from Baghdad, of course, because of the trade embargo dating back to the last Gulf war. Endlessly protracted negotiations with Syria had broken down just before the United States invaded Iraq, but loans from a dozen other countries were trickling in more or less on schedule.

"This is the most complicated show I have ever been involved with," Mahrukh Tarapor, the Met's associate director of exhibitions, said last week. An elegant and subtle woman who was born in Bombay and educated at Harvard, Tarapor has spent much of the past sixteen years travelling around the world, negotiating loans of objects the Met wants to borrow. She had been working on the "First Cities" exhibition since January, 1997, and what made things so complicated was partly the events of September 11, 2001, "which brought everything to a grinding halt," and partly the reluctance of the museum officials in certain countries she visited—

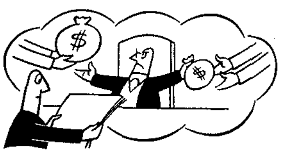
Saudi Arabia, for example—to deal on equal terms with a woman. Tarapor described how, at the National Museum in Riyadh, she kept asking to see a very large, very early stone statue of a "Standing Nude Belted Figure" which was on the most-wanted list of Joan Aruz, the curator in charge of the Met's exhibition. "There was always a little delegation taking me around, and whenever I asked about this figure they would all burst into Arabic chatter, and nothing would happen. My last day there, I said, 'Well, I think you're going to cost me my job,' and so finally they took me down three levels, to storage. The object was in a huge crate. They opened the crate, and there he was, a very noble figure, and of course I realized why they hadn't shown it to me. This was the land of Wahhabism, where statues of the human figure are forbidden. I said I understood their reluctance, but I argued that the statue was pre-Islamic, and so forth, and finally they agreed to send it. Your success in any country is related to how much you're ready to earn people's trust. You just pray that some sneeze out of Washington doesn't end up making them change their minds."

Much of the material in "First Cities" comes from Western museums. The British Museum is sending, among many other objects, the great "Standard of Ur," a mosaic displaying scenes of royalty in one of the most important Sumerian urban centers; Ur was in what is now southern Iraq, near Nasiriya, where U.S. forces encountered such fierce resistance in late March. The Louvre, "which more or less emptied its galleries to help us," according to Tarapor, has sent its world-famous diorite statue of Gudea, the enlightened and humanistic ruler of the city-state of Lagash, which was also in southern Iraq. One of the great themes of Mesopotamian art was the interaction between humans and gods. Joan Aruz refers in the exhibition's huge catalogue to "combinations of human and animal figures [which] create images of supernatural creatures," such as the immensely powerful "Standing Lioness Demon" lent by the Brooklyn Museum and the many images of bulls or bull-humans, which symbolized power and fertility. More vigorous and less refined than Egyptian art of the same period, which shows few indications of Mesopotamian influence, the Sumerian styles in sculpture, beadwork, pottery, metal, and other materials spread all the way to the Indus River Valley, some eighteen hundred miles to the east. "We talk about globalization today," Tarapor said, "but they were every bit as global as we are."

As the show's opening date neared, the Metropolitan Museum's director, Philippe de Montebello, was in the forefront of an international effort to rescue at least some of the irreplaceable treasures looted from the Baghdad museum and other Iraqi museums. "There is no market for this material," he said emphatically. "Not a single museum, not a single serious collector or auction house and almost no dealers will touch it. This could be the death knell for these objects, because it invites you to destroy them. If you have some of the wonderful gold from Nimrud, and no one to buy it, at least you can melt it down and get three hundred and thirty dollars an ounce." De Montebello and other museum professionals favor offering an amnesty—and a small reward—to any Iraqi who turns in stolen antiquities. He has argued for this in discussions with the director general of UNESCO, and with Karl Rove and other officials in Washington, D.C. "I think it's enough in the air so that it may happen," he said. He also hopes that the "First Cities" exhibition, coming at this particular moment, could help the international rescue effort. "When people get a sense of the beauty of these objects," he said, "it might give them a kind of poignant visual prod."

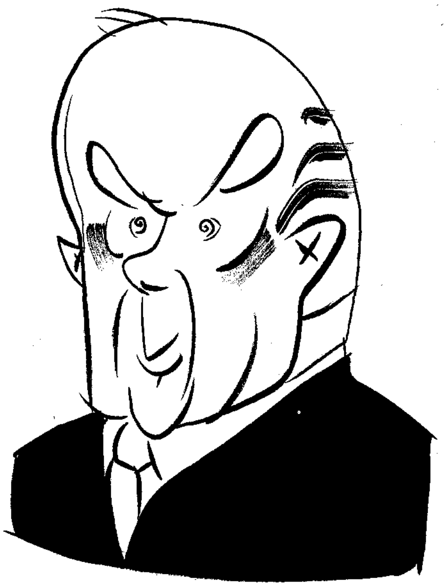
—*Calvin Tomkins*

DEPT. OF CONNECTIONS
THE CONTRACTORS



Back when Americans were still debating whether there was just cause for a preëmptive strike against Iraq, few arguments were scrutinized more closely than the Bush Administration's contention that there were covert links between Al Qaeda and Iraq. At the C.I.A., analysts pored over aerial satellite photographs. At the Treasury Department, experts sifted through financial records. At the National Security Agency, Arab-speaking linguists eavesdropped on phone conversations. But, even after Secretary of State Colin Powell put his credibility on the line, in a damning, dot-connecting speech before the United Nations last February, questions persisted about the solidity of the alleged links between Saddam and Osama.

Now there is a new and demonstrable connection, but it is not the kind that the Bush Administration had in mind. In fact, it is more likely to fuel the speculations of conspiracy theorists than it is to put their fears to rest. It turns out that a money trail runs—albeit rather circuitously—from the lucrative business of rebuilding Iraq to the fortune behind Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden's estranged family, a sprawling, extraordinarily wealthy Saudi Arabian dynasty, is a substantial investor in a private equity firm founded by the Bechtel Group of San Francisco. Bechtel is also the global construction and engineering company to which the U.S. government recently awarded the first major multimillion-dollar contract to reconstruct war-ravaged Iraq. In a closed competitive bidding process, the United States Agency for International Development chose Bechtel to rebuild the major elements of Iraq's infrastructure, including its roads, railroads, airports, hospitals, and schools, and its water and electrical systems. In the first phase of the contract, the U.S. government will pay Bechtel nearly thirty-five million dollars, but experts say that the cost is likely to reach six hundred and eighty million during the next year and a half.


George Shultz

When the contract was awarded, two weeks ago, the Administration did not mention that the bin Laden family has an ongoing relationship with Bechtel. The bin Ladens have a ten-million-dollar stake in the Fremont Group, a San Francisco-based company formerly called Bechtel Investments, which was until 1986 a subsidiary of Bechtel. The Fremont Group's Web site, which makes no mention of the bin Ladens, notes that "though now independent, Fremont enjoys a close relationship with Bechtel." A spokeswoman for the company confirmed that Fremont's "majority ownership is the Bechtel family." And a list of the corporate board of directors shows substantial overlap. Five of Fremont's eight directors are also directors of Bechtel. One Fremont director, Riley Bechtel, is the chairman and chief executive officer of the Bechtel Group, and is a member of the Bush Administration: he was appointed this year to serve on the President's Export Council. In addition, George Shultz, the Secretary of State in the Reagan Administration, serves as a director both of Fremont and of the Bechtel Group, where he once was president and still is listed as senior counsellor.

Rick Kopf, the general counsel of the Fremont Group, which manages some eleven billion dollars in assets, confirms that the bin Laden family invested about ten million dollars in one of Fremont's private funds before September 11, 2001. He noted that the bin Laden family has not enlarged its stake since then, but he declined to provide additional details about its association with the firm. He also chose not to discuss the origin or the nature of the relationship between the bin Laden and Bechtel families, both of which made fortunes in huge construction projects in the Arab world. The Fremont Group evidently does not go in for connecting the dots. As Kopf said, "Ownership is private and is not disclosed."

—*Jane Mayer*

NO. 1 FAN DEPT.
ACKNOWLEDGED

The success of "The Da Vinci Code," a new thriller by Dan Brown, isn't exactly a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, but it certainly is astonishing, because novels by unheralded writers like Dan Brown almost never début at the top of the *Times* best-seller list, as "The Da Vinci Code" did, a few weeks ago. The secret, it seems, was an advance-copy bombardment of booksellers, authors, and reviewers—ten thousand free books delivered to readers whose opinions supposedly matter enough to stimulate the traffic in editions that are not free.

A small testament to the wisdom of this approach can be found, embedded like one of Brown's esoteric clues, in the book's acknowledgments. There, among the names of curators, cryptologists, and academics, is the name Francis McInerney; McInerney, as Amazon enthusiasts may know, is one of the site's most prolific generators of customer reviews. He is, in fact, a Top Ten Reviewer. This designation reflects not just his output (eight hundred and seventy-nine reviews, at last count) but also other people's reactions to it. When you read a customer review on Amazon, you can vote on whether you've found it helpful. McInerney's ranking—No. 6, to be precise—indicates that users have found him to be more helpful than all but five of Amazon's hundreds of thousands of amateur critics.

McInerney is a forty-one-year-old commercial-real-estate-development executive (currently between jobs) who lives with his wife and two kids outside Springfield, Massachusetts. On the phone last week, he provided a glimpse of the cutthroat world of online literary politics, noting, for example, that other reviewers sometimes create multiple e-mail accounts and repeatedly vote "not helpful" on his reviews in an attempt to catch up with him. "As soon as Amazon started ranking people, everything in human nature that's associated with being competitive came out," he said.

McInerney's first Amazon review, in 1997, was of Robert Ludlum's "The Matarese Countdown" ("Wonderful book, may you write dozens more!"), and his most recent was of "The Da Vinci Code" ("A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, as Sir Winston Spencer Churchill once wrote. . . . A fantastic ride"). He said that he reads about a hundred and fifty books a year, and his body of work suggests an omnivorous appetite: biographies, thrillers, histories of science and art, mountain-climbing yarns, and anything relating to "Star Trek" or "Star Wars." He doesn't write many negative reviews, but he can occasionally be ruthless, as in a 1999 review of "The New New Thing," Michael Lewis's story of the entrepreneur Jim Clark ("Jim Clark does nothing except whine, complain, whine, and then complain some more. . . . The writer should find a worthier topic").

McInerney first came across Dan Brown's work three years ago, when he read Brown's second book, "Angels & Demons." McInerney especially admired its technical accuracy. "Do you know from where the word Assassin is derived from?" he wrote. "I do, and I have seen other Authors botch this, Mr. Brown gets it correct." He gave the book five (out of five) stars and not long afterward received a note of thanks from Brown, along with a signed copy of the book.

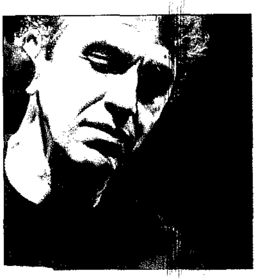
"It's a kick to get a note," McInerney said. "I do this for fun. I don't get paid or anything, or even get a special discount. The benefits to me have been the relationships or contacts that I've made by e-mailing or possibly meeting authors." Others who have written to him, he said, are the lawyer Gerry Spence, the journalist Ted Gup, and "a lot of second-tier authors."

"Francis is a fascinating guy," Dan Brown said the other day. "He's a maniacal reader. I've never met him. A couple of times, he's sent me galleys of my books, and I've signed them." Earlier this year, Brown sent McInerney an advance copy of "The Da Vinci Code." Days later, McInerney e-mailed Brown: "Your finest book to date. You've raised the bar to loftier heights." He also offered a few factual corrections. For one, silencers don't really silence handguns—at least, not the way they do on TV. "You're an established author," McInerney told him. "I would imagine the state police would allow you to fire a 'silenced gun.' Wear headgear." For another, if a plane is a Citation it can't be a turboprop. He then urged Brown to consider having one of his characters utter a certain Churchill quote ("a riddle wrapped in a mystery," etc.). Brown was grateful for the first two suggestions, anyway, and in another e-mail he asked McInerney if including him in the acknowledgments would compromise him.

McInerney wrote back, "I would be honored. . . . It has been a goal of mine

ZANKEL HALL
AT CARNEGIE

John Adams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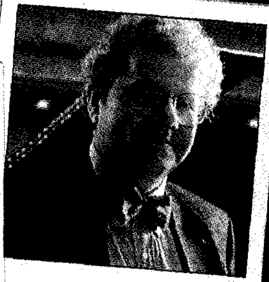
Emanuel Ax

Emmylou Harris

Michael Tilson Thomas

Frank Gehry

Dave Holland

Kronos Quartet

PHOTOS: Smith courtesy of CBS; N'Dour by Galilea Nin; Ma by Chris Lee; Upshaw by Joel Meyerowitz; Ax by J. Henry Fair; Levine by Koichi Miura; Kronos Quartet by Jay Blakesberg; Tilson Thomas by Susan Schelling; Veloso by Marcos Hermes; McDonald by Pamela Springsteen; Gehry by Todd Eberle.
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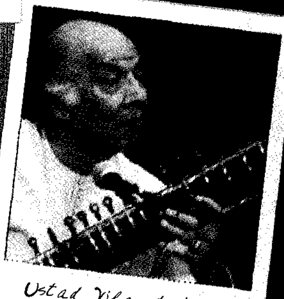
Audra McDonald

Yo-Yo Ma


Ustad Vilayat Khan

ZANKEL HALL
AT CARNEGIE

SEASON

JOHN ADAMS • PIE
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• YEFIM BRONFMAN
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MAGDALENA KOŽENA • DAVID [illegible]
• GIDON KREMER • [illegible]
• JOAN LA BARBARA • STEVE LACY
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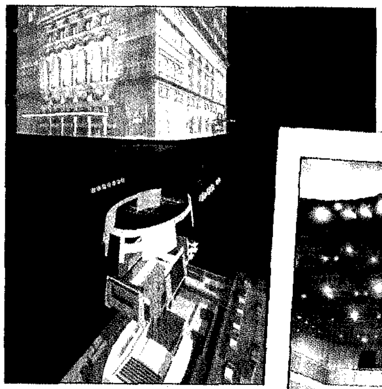

ZANKEL HALL
UNDER CARNEGIE HALL
computer rendering

VIEW FROM THE STAGE
computer rendering

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CARNEGIE HALL

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since I started doing this. The other goal, my personal quest, my 'Holy Grail,' is to get quoted on the jacket." As it happens, McInerney has received one nasty note about his appearance in the acknowledgments. "The guy just railed against me," he said. "I wrote back saying, 'I presume you think I benefited or was paid in some way. Many authors have asked me for input or comments, and I have done it, and this is Dan Brown's way of saying thanks.' "

After the book came out and the review went up, McInerney e-mailed Brown to ask if an upcoming appearance by Brown at a bookstore in Framingham might provide a good opportunity for them finally to meet. Or would it be too crowded? Brown responded that he couldn't predict what the turnout would be.

—Nick Paumgarten

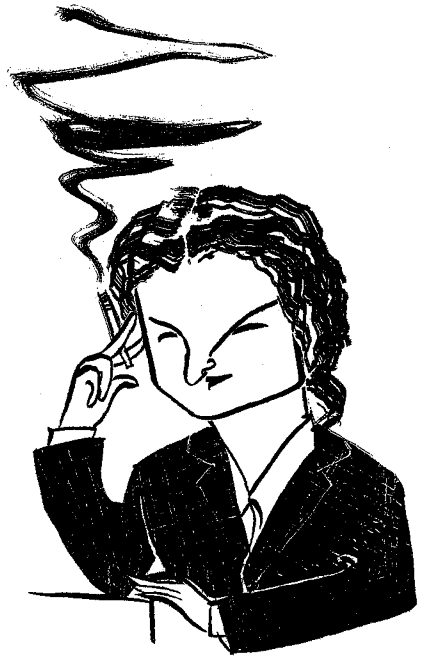
THE DRESSING ROOM
A GOOD NOSE

What with the hubbub over Nicole Kidman's nose in "The Hours"—the film didn't get a best-makeup Oscar nomination because the nose was digitally enhanced—this is a good time to be a maker of bona-fide artificial noses. John Caglione, Jr., who won the Oscar for makeup in 1991, for his work in the movie "Dick Tracy," takes great pride in his craft. "You have to be a really good sculptor to make a foamed-latex nose," he explained the other day from his studio, on Long Island. He was busy baking nose molds for the actress Tovah Feldshuh, who plays Golda Meir in the play "Golda's Balcony." "A nose is a tricky appliance, because it has to blend in with the whole face—it's kind of the bull's-eye on the target," Caglione said.

It is widely understood in the industry that the best makeup artists work in film, not theatre, because of the closeup. So when David Fishelson, the artistic director of the Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, which is putting on "Golda's Balcony," went looking for a nose man for the show he looked to Hollywood. "Caglione is Pacino's personal prostheticist," Fishelson said. "This guy's a major Hollywood guy—he's the one people go to when they want a nose."

"For 'Dick Tracy,' I made Al a nose and an upper lip and a chin appliance," Caglione said. "He said he looked like a cross between Adolf Hitler and Groucho Marx." Caglione's expertise doesn't come cheap. "It's not too bad, price-wise," Fishelson said philosophically. "It's kind of the cost of another actor."

The Golda nose is made of foamed latex. "I first have to make positive and negative molds, which get baked in the oven for two hours," Caglione explained. "The positive mold represents Tovah's nose, the negative mold is Golda's nose, and then the two molds lock together. To make Tovah's mold, I took an impression of her face—the same way a dentist uses that jellylike stuff to make a mold of your teeth—but there's this special kind that's used for prosthetics, for people missing arms and legs. It's called prosthetic alginate. Then on top of that I lay plaster-of-Paris bandages. To make the negative mold of Golda's face, I surround my desk with photographs of her, and I get out my clay and make a guesstimate. In the airspace between Golda's nose and Tovah's mold, I pump in latex. When you pry the molds apart, you have a custom-made foamed-latex appliance that fits Tovah's nose exactly! I've done four molds, so I can make, like, eight noses a day. It's an assembly line—the mass production of noses." During the eleven-week run of "Golda's Balcony," Tovah Feldshuh will go through eighty noses, which are all applied at the theatre by Caglione's colleague Trevor McGinniss. The process takes forty-five minutes. "It's one nose per day," Fishelson said. "When the nose comes off Tovah, it has to be destroyed."



Tovah Feldshuh as Golda

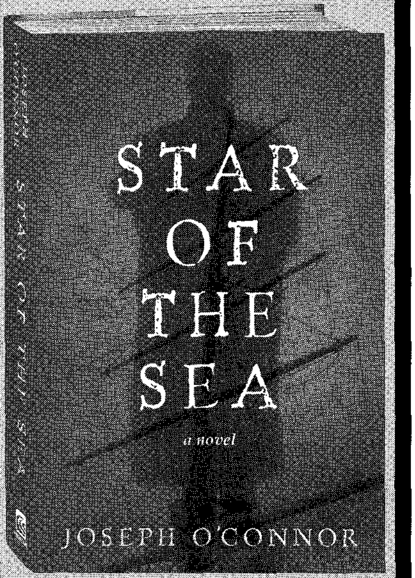
In the seventies, before he started making noses, Caglione made the cones for the Coneheads on "Saturday Night Live." John Belushi's cone sits on a shelf in his studio. "I also made the chin patches for the Blues Brothers," he said. His interest in makeup started early. "I saw the old Frankenstein movie, with Boris Karloff—I must have been eight years old—and I asked my dad, 'Is there an island where they get people who look like that?,' and my dad said, 'No, there's a makeup artist who makes them look that way. It's a trade, and you can learn how to do it.'

"When I was twelve, I sent my brother to the emergency room. One night, when he was maybe twenty, I tried to make a cast of his face. This is before I knew about alginate. I had this stuff called dental stone. I put it on my brother, but I didn't know that as it sets it goes up to about 220 degrees Fahrenheit. I nearly baked him! We tried to chisel it off, but the stuff was like granite. I had stuck straws through his nostrils so he could breathe, but it was hot under there. I remember my dad and I dunked his face in water in the bathroom sink, and when the water came out of the nostril holes my brother looked like a fountain. So we took him to the emergency room around midnight. The doctors just ripped the stone straight off. It took his eyebrows and his mustache with it—and it was the early seventies, so he also had these big long sideburns. He still has a chunk of the mold on his bureau; it's weird to see the eyebrow emerging from the dental stone. It's a perfect eyebrow, every follicle ripped right out."

In the intervening decades, Caglione evidently got better. "I gotta tell you," he said. "Making noses, it's like a drug to me."

—Liesl Schillinger

Set sail on a
voyage of tragedy
and mercy, love
and healing



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LIFE AND LETTERS

THE MARX BROTHER

How a philosopher from Slovenia became an international star.

BY REBECCA MEAD

Like all the small, oddly shaped European countries that emerged from the shadow of the Soviet bloc in the last decade of the twentieth century, Slovenia has needed to work hard to establish its place on the international stage. This has been something of a challenge, on account of the country's tiny population, just two million, and its diminutive size. Slovenia, the first of the former Yugoslav republics to become independent, is slightly smaller than New Jersey, though it has considerably more mountains—about a third of the country consists of Alps that have burst beyond Austria's seams—and rather less beach; its coastline is twenty-nine miles long and squeezed between Italy and Croatia, with whom it has a contested border. The project of Slovenian distinctiveness was surely not helped when, a year after independence, Slovakia made its own declaration of statehood, thus confusing those casual watchers of the world scene who were still having trouble distinguishing between Latvia and Lithuania.

Slovoj Zizek's appeal lies in his accessible absurdity. Photograph by Dudley Reed.

Slovenia has, however, a reputation disproportionately large for its size when it comes to the world of ideas. This state of affairs is due to the work of Slavoj Zizek, a fifty-four-year-old Lacanian-Marxist philosopher from Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. Zizek, who has been translated into more than twenty languages, has written books on subjects as wide-ranging as Hitchcock, Lenin, opera, and the terrorist attacks of September 11th. In the fifteen years since he started publishing in English, Zizek has established himself as a thinker whose views are worth paying attention to—if not always taking seriously, since always to take Slavoj Zizek seriously would be to make a category mistake.

Zizek leaves no social or natural phenomenon untheorized, and is a master of the counterintuitive observation; he has, for example, criticized political theorists who argue that America has become a post-industrial society by pointing out that the working class of the United States still exists and can be found in China, and has also noted that the "close door" button in an elevator does nothing to hasten the door closing but merely gives the presser a false sense of effective activity. Like many of Zizek's observations, this is the kind of insight that forever changes one's experience, in this case of elevator riding, even if one does not necessarily follow Zizek in his comparison of the beguiled button-presser to the hapless citizen of a Western liberal democracy who thinks he's participating in the political process by voting but, because of the consensus on fundamental issues shared by both major parties, has actually been offered no choice at all. Zizek's aim, in his work, is to combine a Marxist critique of capitalism with a psychoanalytically informed unmasking of the ways in which capitalism works upon the public imagination. His favored form of argument is paradox, and his favored mode of delivery is a kind of vaudevillian overstatement, buttressed by the appearance of utter conviction.

There are not many places in the world hospitable to a thinker whose two theoretical foundations are an extremely difficult French psychoanalyst—the number of people who are equipped to discuss the works of Jacques Lacan rivals the number of those who are fluent in Slovene—and a political theorist who inspired a century's worth of political experiments now considered to have been a disaster by almost everyone save a few holdouts in countries like North Korea. Among the places a Lacanian-Marxist can feel at home are the English departments of many American universities, those lonely outposts of left-wing conviction in a country where radical socialism is about as likely to take root as radical fruitarianism. Here Zizek is a celebrated and pampered guest, bristling with authenticity. He has held visiting posts at Duke and at Princeton and at Cardozo Law School, in New York City, and has lectured widely elsewhere in the United States. "People have been worried that so much social and literary theory is so difficult and rarefied that they can't really relate to it," Judith Butler, who teaches at Berkeley, says. "But Zizek is very interested in engaging popular culture to ground his views, and for many people it has come as a great relief that he can be talking about Althusser and 'Gladiator' at the same time." James Miller, the chairman of the liberal-studies department at New School University, where Zizek was a visiting professor six years ago, says, "He was like Diogenes the Cynic parachuted into the American academy."

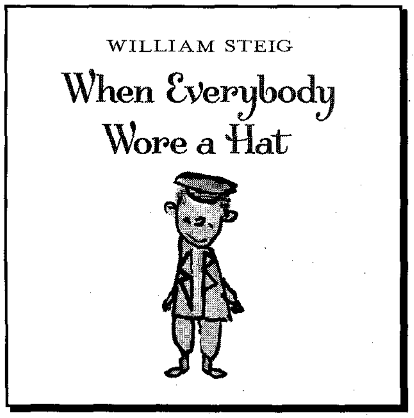
Zizek is bearded and bearish, and restricts his wardrobe to proletarian shirts and bluejeans, with an occasional excursion into corduroy. He owns neither jacket nor tie. He speaks six languages, is made uncomfortable by conversational lapses, and avoids them through the ample use of animated monologue. He speaks English at high speed in an accent recalling that of Latka, the character of indeterminate Mitteleuropean origin played by Andy Kaufman on "Taxi." If, in the progress of intellectual fashions, Jacques Derrida's appeal was that he was fascinatingly difficult, and Michel Foucault's was that he was sexily rigorous, then Zizek's lies in his accessible absurdity. Unlike earlier academic superstars, however, Zizek has no disciples: there is no School of Zizek, no graduate students writing Zizekian readings of the novels of Henry James or of "Star Trek" for their theses. Such a thing would be impossible, since one of the characteristics of Zizek's work is that he applies his critical methodology even to the results of his own critical inquiry, which is another way of saying that he contradicts himself all the time. Eric Santner, who teaches at the University of Chicago and is a close friend of Zizek, says, "One of his fundamental gestures is this: he will present a problem, or a text, then produce the reading that you have come to expect from him, and then he will say, 'I am tempted to think it is just the opposite.' " To a generation of students raised on "Seinfeld," Zizek's examination of the minutiae of popular culture—his observation, for example, that when he sees a tube of toothpaste advertising "thirty per cent free" he wants to cut off the free third and put it in his pocket—could not be more familiar, and neither could the ironic, self-undermining gesture. As Zizek might put it, he may appear to be a serious leftist intellectual, but is it not the case that he is in fact a comedian?

Recently, Zizek was in Chicago, where he was delivering a lecture at the basement Institute for the Humanities of the University of Illinois. It was a chill, icy afternoon, and Zizek was led through the modernist campus of the university, with its tower blocks perched on stilts, by an open-faced young associate professor named Nicholas Brown. When the buildings were first erected, in the mid-sixties, Brown explained, they were linked by elevated walkways, so that, as campus legend has it, students would not have the opportunity to congregate in open spaces, protesting the types of things students protested in those days. This is the kind of remembrance of authoritarianism past that delights Zizek, one of whose formative experiences was being in Prague during the spring of 1968, just as Russian tanks rolled in. "I found there, on the central square, a café that miraculously worked through this emergency," he says. "I remember they had wonderful strawberry cakes, and I was sitting there eating strawberry cakes and watching Russian tanks against demonstrators. It was perfect." Zizek has since developed diabetes, which makes the memory more poignant still.

Zizek's lecture was entitled "The Perverse Core of Christianity." Lately, he has taken to writing a great deal about Christianity, his enthusiasm for which is matched only by his commitment to atheism. Among his recent publications, he is most proud of having been asked to contribute to a German

From celebrated author and artist
WILLIAM STEIG

WILLIAM STEIG
When Everybody Wore a Hat



This is the story of when I was a boy, almost 100 years ago,
when fire engines were pulled by horses,
boys did not play with girls,
kids went to libraries for books,
there was no TV,
you could see a movie for a nickel,
and everybody wore a hat.

William Steig

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newsletter for priests that offers material for sermons. "This is, like, if you want to educate small girls, you ask a pervert," he says.

For an hour, Zizek led his audience on a bewildering tour of his current thinking on religion, which included his admiration for St. Paul as the first Leninist ("He said, let's go to work, let's build the Party"); his impatience with the kind of cultural-studies academic who speaks respectfully of the religious traditions of others but finds actual religious belief embarrassing ("To put it in crazy terms, I was almost on the Taliban's side when they were bombing the Bamian statues—everyone was so outraged but was also saying, 'Oh, but we don't really believe' "); and a riff on a child's eagerness to get to the toy inside a chocolate egg as demonstrating what Lacan called "object small-a" ("This is the perfect case of Jacques Lacan's motto from Seminar 11: I love you, but inexplicably I love something in you more than you, and therefore I destroy you"). He explained what he meant by the perverse core of Christianity—that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross offers a way for the Christian to indulge in secret desires without having to pay for them—with an illustration from what he referred to as one of the great achievements of Western civilization: "The Sound of Music." "After Maria goes back to the monastery because she is unable to deal with her attraction to Captain von Trapp, she goes to the Reverend Mother expecting some stern advice," Zizek said. "But, instead of criticizing her, the Reverend Mother gives her the message in that weird song 'Climb Every Mountain.' I think this is the most obscene moment in the movie. The very person one would expect to preach abstinence turns out to be the agent of fidelity to one's longings. Significantly, when 'The Sound of Music' was shown in the ex-Yugoslavia, the three minutes of this song was the only part of the film that was censored."

It was an extremely entertaining performance, though one contrived to leave the audience perplexed about what, exactly, Zizek stood for. One man, from the back of the room, accused Zizek of "weak-mindedness" for adhering to atheism after making such a spirited case for Christianity. Zizek replied, "When I discuss Christianity with superficial Catholics, their usual line of defense is to say, 'You atheists, you cannot really understand what is a religious experience.' But how do they know what is an atheist experience? I am almost tempted to claim that it is more natural for us to believe. To be an atheist, my God, is a very difficult thing."

An elderly man raised his hand. "What, in your opinion, is a good social order?" he asked. "Communism!" Zizek said, affecting surprise that he could be expected to deliver any other answer. "I am absolutely in favor of egalitarianism with a taste of terror." There was laughter among the younger generation while the elderly man looked horrified, and stammered, "I've seen dictatorships in other countries, and I believe democracy is better than your dictatorships."

"I agree," Zizek said. "But my problem is, what is democracy today? I am not saying Eastern European socialism is better—my God, I lived there. But take this country. What do you, here, decide at elections? I am just saying that something happened twenty or twenty-five years ago, with the collapse of socialism, and, at the same time, the Western social-democratic worker state losing its power of sustaining political imagination. What disappeared at that point was the belief that humanity, as a collective subject, can actively intervene and somehow steer social development. In the last thirty years, we are again accepting the notion of history as fate. Thirty or forty years ago, there were still debates about what the future will be—Communism, socialism, fascism, liberal capitalism, totalitarian bureaucratic capitalism. The idea was that life would somehow go on on earth, but that there are different possibilities. Now we talk all the time about the end of the world, but it is much easier for us to imagine the end of the world than a small change in the political system. Life on earth maybe will end, but somehow capitalism will go on."

Although Zizek spends about two-thirds of his time circulating through the campuses of Western universities, his official employer is the Department of Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana. Thanks to the lingering social-

LULLABY

Last night, in the dark, something
came near and frightened me
and left me turning in my bed, listening
to the hum of a mosquito—almost the timbre
of a human voice—as it came and went.
She must have entered from the garden
through the torn screen, looking
to calm a need of her own
and called to—so I've been told—
by the sound a heart makes.
No, this isn't another metaphor
meant to adorn a romantic tale.
Like you, I'd kill a mosquito in a moment.
But it does make one stop and think
how driven we are, even the least, to hear
the world's incessant undersong—
even if it was never meant for us
or never anything but clamor we wanted to *be* song—
and how much we love it, and with what sadness,
knowing we have to turn away
and enter the dark.

—*Peter Everwine*

ist practice of funding artists and intellectuals to a degree unheard of in a market economy, Zizek has no teaching responsibilities at the university, and is free to abandon his post often in order to take up his prestigious overseas assignments. Zizek has been courted by academic institutions in the United States to make a permanent home in this country, but he has resisted the seduction. "In the United States, you have all these office hours and students, and that is madness," he says. "People are always asking me, Why don't you get a job in the States? But I am not interested, basically. Why, if you have a job where you do nothing, would you change it for a job where you have to do something?"

Though he may lack explicit responsibilities, Zizek works constantly, and publishes as fast as he can think, sometimes faster. His most recent book to be published in the United States is "Welcome to the Desert of the Real," five essays commenting on the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; because Zizek had trouble making up his mind exactly what he thought about September 11th, he revised the book before sending it off to different foreign publishers. Zizek's current take on September 11th is that, contrary to the received wisdom—that the attacks delivered a wakeup call to the United States and reminded Americans that there is a world beyond their shores—September 11th really acted as a sedative, an opportunity for the return to a nostalgic dream of American superiority and distinctiveness which had been in abeyance since Vietnam, and could now be augmented by a satisfying sense of victimhood. Zizek is a little embarrassed by his more journalistic writing, and says that he would like to publish only pure philosophy; but the lure of a popular audience has proved irresistible.

His relentless compulsion to theorymonger is, he moans, a curse. "I live a horrible life," he says. "All pleasures are ruined for me. Last night, I listened to Wagner's 'Siegfried,' in order to relax, and it was so wonderful. But after half an hour I started writing down ideas. It happens to me all the time. People say, 'I envy you—you do for work what we do for fun.' But they don't know it is also the other way around." He reads at least three books at a time, so that when he

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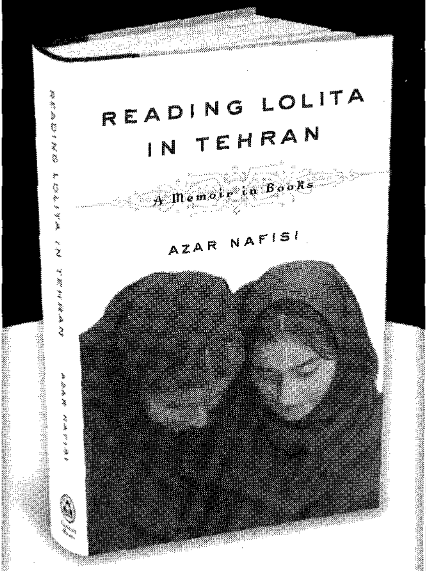

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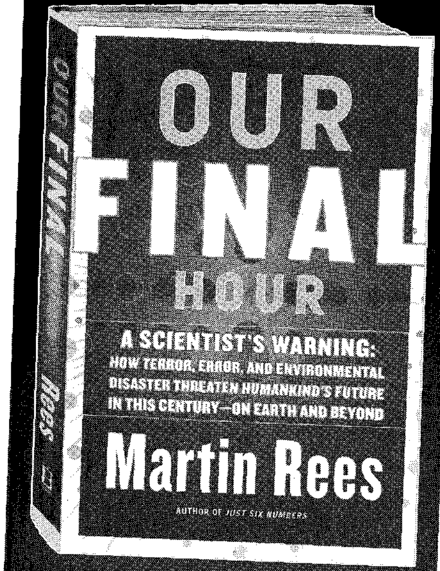
OUR FINAL HOUR
A SCIENTIST'S WARNING:
HOW TERROR, ERROR, AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER THREATEN HUMANKIND'S FUTURE IN THIS CENTURY—ON EARTH AND BEYOND
Martin Rees
AUTHOR OF JUST SIX NUMBERS

Startling scenarios of how advances in science and technology are making our world a more dangerous place:

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- Rogue nano-machines
- Bio-error risks as grave as bio-terror risks
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"Rees, the U.K.'s Astronomer Royal and prolific author...poses some hard questions about scientists' responsibility to forsake research that might lead to a malevolent genie being let out of its bottle...[and] makes some provocative points."
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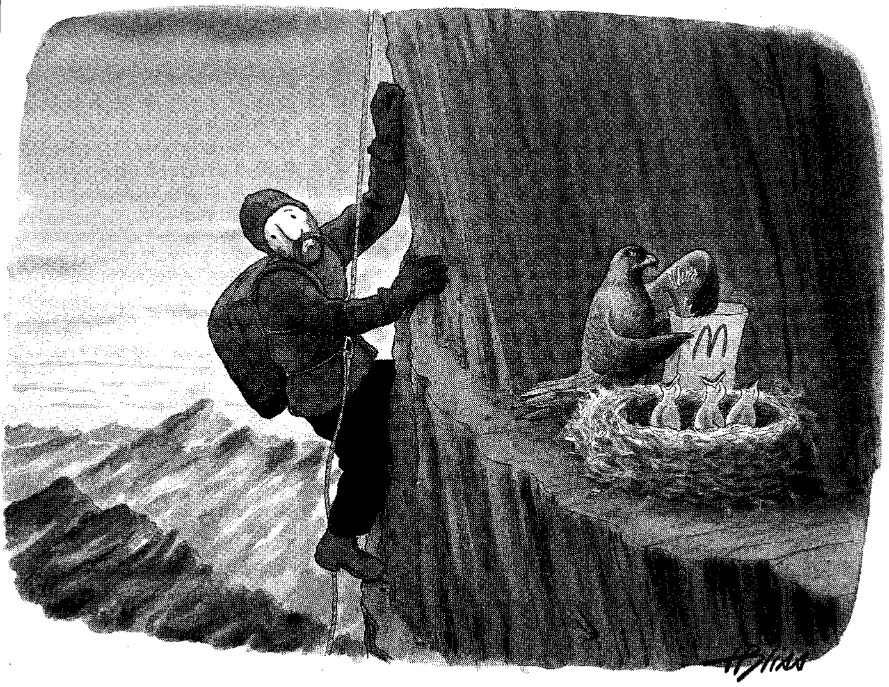

tires of reading he can relax by switching to a different book. He does not indulge in the favored pastimes of his countrymen, such as skiing. "I have a whole rational theory against skiing," he says. "What does skiing mean? It means that you go up to go down. So why don't you stay down the whole time and read a good book?" Though he loves the opera, attending a performance, like all supposedly recreational activities, consists of anxiety piled on top of nervousness. A recent production of "Die Walküre" left him a wreck: "There were two understudies, and before the third act they announced that the understudy for Wotan had got a slight throat inflammation, but, heroically, he would try to go on," he said. "I know the opera by heart, and every time there was a long passage approaching I was completely terrified for him." Zizek does not drink or smoke, though he says he would love to do both, if only he liked the taste. Even sex is not, for him, an escape into unself-consciousness. "Are you crazy?" he says. "That is where one should control oneself. Sex is duty—my God—sex is not pleasure."

Zizek lives alone in a neat studio apartment in Ljubljana that is equipped with a twin bed, a television, a VCR, a DVD player, a desk, and a laptop. The walls are lined with shelves full of books and videos. "Videos and DVDs have ruined movies for me," he says. "Instead of seeing the movie, I buy it, and then I have it, so why should I watch it?" Zizek has been married and divorced twice, and has a son from each marriage; one son is thirty, and the other is three. (Officially, he doesn't have a girlfriend; unofficially, he does.) "If anything, I have too much space," he says of his home. "Every two months, I am doing a nice Stalinist purge. I look at a book and say, 'Will I ever really read this?' It is like Stalin said: This guy is no good for socialism, so out to the Gulag he goes."

His shelves are filled with theoretical works as well as some popular books. Zizek is particularly fond of detective novels, and he considers Patricia Highsmith "the best writer of the twentieth century—even better than Chandler." He adds, "People who say 'Don't tell me the end' have it all wrong. I read the first ten pages and then I read the ending, and that is the test: do I still want to read it?" His collection of movies includes the Nazi propaganda film "The Eternal Jew," the sale of which is banned in Germany ("All my German leftist friends have copies"), and Soviet-era romances about happy agricultural workers. He also has some popular movies, including "Liar Liar" and "The Last Seduction." The actress Linda Fiorentino is among the people Zizek would most like to have dinner with, as is the actress Liv Tyler. "And it is a great sin to admit it and now I deny it, but I used to have a crush on Meg Ryan," he says. "Everyone says, 'How could you?' But at the beginning she made a thriller, a remake of an old film noir. Now, with this Tom Hanks stuff, it is over." There is a kitchenette in the apartment with enough room for him to pour a can of soup into a saucepan, heat it up, eat it, and wash the dish without taking a step. His bathroom is equipped with tiny bottles of shampoo from the hotels of many nations. "All my socks are from Lufthansa," he says.

Like his apartment, Zizek's writing betrays his peripatetic life style. When he illustrates the sameness between political parties on an American electoral ballot by comparing the choice to that between Equal and Sweet'n Low, or between Letterman and Leno, the text speaks of insomniac nights spent in places like the Evanston Hilton, absorbing America through the blue screen.

Ljubljana is a city of great charm, built on the Sava River, with cobblestoned streets, Baroque churches, and handsome Art Nouveau stores. Its most celebrated landmark is a castle perched on top of a hill, which Zizek has never visited; while walking around Ljubljana, he is more concerned with pointing out the kinds of sights that are not included in the tourist guides. Crossing the principal thoroughfare, Zizek says, "This is the main street of Ljubljana, which in a typical post-socialist way used to be called Tito Street and is now called Slovenia Street." As he passes a nineteen-fifties office building that adjoins a nineteenth-century building, he says, "The newer building is the Parliament, and the old one was the office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. I love how they didn't even pretend to keep them separate." At the Three Bridges, a picturesque crossing point at a bend in the river, he says, "Those bridges were designed by a fascist architect in the nineteen-thirties who has recently been reclaimed as a postmodernist." Seeing a street-side hawker selling copies of *Mladina*, a weekly magazine that was an important dissident organ in the nineteen-eighties, he comments, "Back then, newsstands weren't allowed to sell *Mladina*, so it had to be sold on the street like this. Now, of course, the newsstands are allowed to sell anything, but *Mladina* likes to keep doing it this way for the appearance of authenticity." He expressed disappointment at the closing of a coffee bar in the old city called Nostalgia: "They served sandwiches made from not very good bread, with just butter and jam, like we had under socialism. I loved that place."

Ljubljana has a population of only two hundred and fifty-four thousand, and is thus rather like a college in which everybody knows everybody and has either slept with them or fought with them or both. Zizek is the Most Likely to Succeed, though he is also endowed with the nervous, awkward manner of one who regularly flunks Phys. Ed. As is true in much of Eastern Europe, intellectuals—even poets—have a more significant role in public life than is the case in nations with more carefree histories. Unlike intellectuals in the rest of Eastern Europe—or anywhere in the world, for that matter—Slovenian intellectuals are oddly familiar with the theories of Jacques Lacan, thanks, largely, to Zizek, who helped introduce his work in the nineteen-seventies. Slovenian magazine editors, artists, and TV talking heads are perplexingly well equipped to throw around Lacanian terms such as "floating signifier" and "big Other." Half the Slovenian government seems to have studied Lacan at the university, including the former General Secretary of the ruling party, Gregor Golobic, who wrote, for his thesis at the University of Ljubljana, a Lacanian critique of the philosophy of Cratylus. ("He is my best friend! I love him!" Zizek says. "He is the future Slovene Stalin. He is a man of power. He is the kind of guy who, when I am in his office and talking with him and a minister calls, he says to the minister, 'Fuck off, I don't have time to talk to you.' ") The philosopher Richard Rorty, who, while teaching at the University of Virginia, invited Zizek and Judith Butler there to discuss Lacan, says, "Zizek told me that

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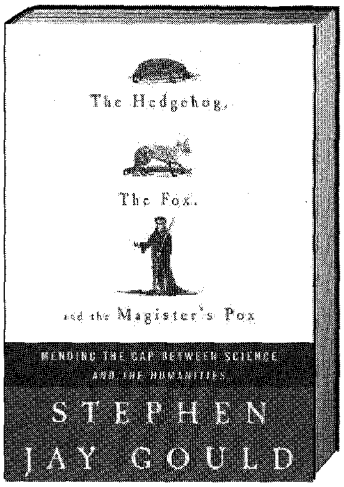

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the great battle in Slovenian politics is between the Lacanians, who dominate the civil service, and the Heideggerians, who dominate the military."

Zizek was the only child of professional parents, and as a teen-ager was a fanatical consumer of movies and books, spending every spare hour watching Hollywood classics at the government-sponsored cinémathèque. As an undergraduate at the University of Ljubljana, he came across the newly emerging works of the French structuralists, who were naturally absent from the Marxist curriculum, and wrote for his master's thesis a survey of the work of Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and other Continental philosophers who have since become canonical. Although the thesis was thought brilliant, Zizek was denied his advanced degree until he agreed to add an appendix giving an account of his criticisms of Marx; that way, should Zizek turn out to be a dangerous dissident, his supervisor would be able to claim that he'd made efforts to keep the young scholar on the correct political track.

Even after revising his work, Zizek was deemed unfit to teach, so eventually he took himself to France, where he lived on and off for four years, studying under Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan's son-in-law and intellectual heir. Zizek also went into psychoanalysis with Miller, after a traumatic love affair. (The woman in question was the wife of a former colleague; to prove his devotion to her, he embedded romantic acrostics in the books he was publishing at the time.) Zizek considers his therapy unfinished. "The analysis did help me along," he says, "but it was not so much what Miller did as the very fact that I would think, Should I kill myself? What am I saying? Tomorrow at five, I have an appointment with my analyst, so how can I kill myself?"

The nineteen-seventies were a bleak time for Zizek, but things took a different turn in the eighties, when the Communist government in Yugoslavia was losing its grip. Although Zizek, like most Yugoslavs who wanted to get along in the world, was a member of the Communist Party, he became active in the opposition movement. He was particularly attuned to public relations. "He liked to quote Lenin as saying that you should do something every day," says Ali Zerdin, a journalist at *Mladina* who was, like Zizek, a member of an opposition group called the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights. "He would always try to anticipate the opposite side's reaction. Once, someone said we should have a hunger strike, and he said, 'No, the Serbian TV will just say that all the fat Slovenian people are on a diet.' "

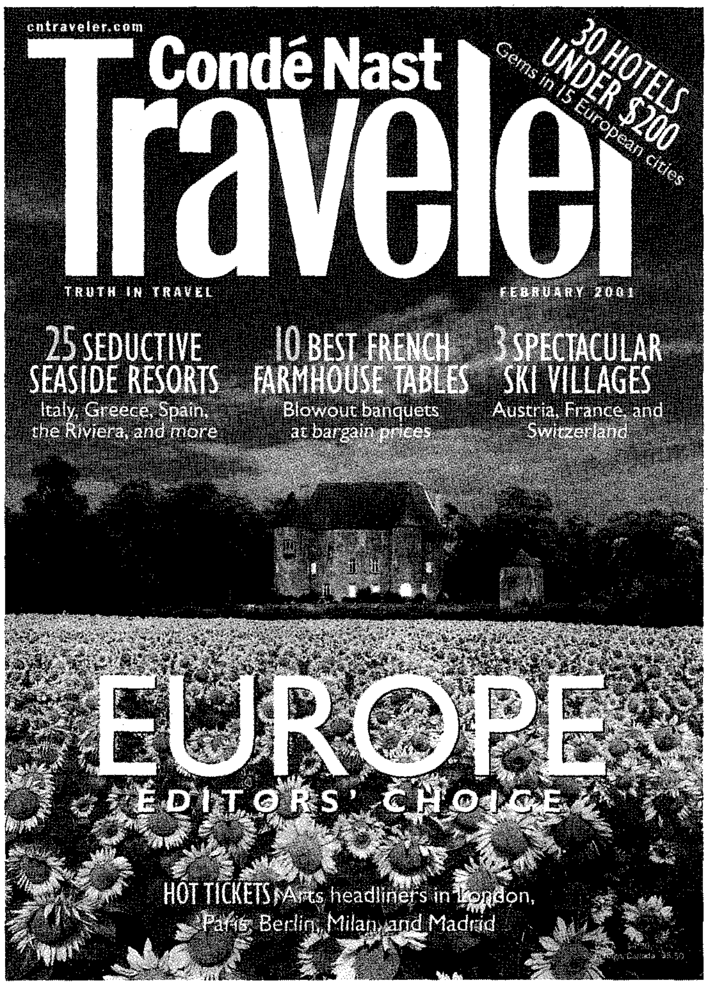
Zizek is of the opinion that citizens of some former socialist countries never had it so good as in the last years of socialism, since, besides having state-subsidized food, housing, wages, and culture, they also had the pleasure of being able to complain about the government. "For three years, there was absolute freedom," he says. "There were none of the regulations that there are now, like over hard-core pornography. Then, you had kiosks selling newspapers, and they'd display posters with the really hard-core stuff. Once, with my son, who was small at the time, I passed a kiosk where there was a large poster with a naked lady sitting on a Harley-Davidson with her legs spread wide, and my son said, 'Look, isn't that nice?' But he didn't notice the lady—he meant the Harley-Davidson! That time is kind of a lost paradise."

In those years, Zizek was instrumental in establishing the ideological principles of the Liberal Democratic party, the moderate, center-left party that grew out of the student movement and has governed Slovenia for the better part of the past decade. "He helped us, because we were twenty- or twenty-five-year-olds wanting to change the state, and he was a professor and very clever, but he didn't become a strong member of the Party, because he always changed his position," Jozef Skolc, the former Minister of Culture, explains. Zizek says now that he was ambivalent about Slovenian independence: he was critical of it on theoretical grounds but embraced its political expediency. He resolved his qualms long enough to run for a seat on Slovenia's four-person Presidential committee in the country's first democratic elections, in 1990, coming in an honorable fifth—by far the best result for him, and perhaps for Slovenia, since, if he had been elected, his first action would have been to resign. "I thought the position meant that you had a meeting once a week, and then a certain influence and power—but no, it was a twenty-four-hour-a-day job, with all these stupid social obligations," he says.

Zizek was asked to consider becoming a government minister in the mid-nineties, and declined. "The Prime Minister said, 'Do you want Science? Culture?' I told him, 'Are you crazy? Who wants that crap? I am only interested in two posts—either Minister

"Must you precede everything you say with 'This is your captain speaking'?"

PURE PLEASURE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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

of the Interior or the head of the Secret Police.'" He was, however, made a kind of cultural ambassador for Slovenia, and was granted a diplomatic passport. He has since relinquished it. "I thought it would make it easier to travel, but it was the opposite," he says. "I would try to go through with the diplomatic passport, and the immigration officials would look at me and think, What kind of diplomat is this guy? So it would take twice as long."

In the week before Slovenia became an independent nation, Zizek contributed an essay to *Mladina* entitled "Hail Freedonia." In it, he adapted an old Marx Brothers joke—"You want a lawyer? Get a lawyer. You'll have more troubles, but at least you'll have a lawyer"—to the project of Slovenian nationalism: "You want to be independent? Be independent. You'll have more problems, but at least you'll be independent." The works of Groucho Marx are as useful a reference in understanding Zizek as are those of Karl Marx, since everything he says about politics should be understood not only as a policy proposal but as a kind of performance piece. James Miller, of the New School, says of Zizek's lectures, "You would sit through these torrents of verbiage, and you had this post-structuralist and relativist aura on the one hand, and then he would be defending something like democratic socialism. The first time I talked with him, I said, 'But Slavoj, this is inconsistent.' He listened to my criticism and ignored it. When he talks, he has such a good time that he just keeps going."

With the works of Karl Marx now standard reading material for campus intellectuals, Zizek has been making the more outrageous case for a return to Lenin; he recently edited a collection of Lenin's works, entitled "Revolution at the Gates," and provided it with a fulsome preface and afterword. "I know Lenin could have been incredibly cruel, and so on," he says. "All I am saying is that it was an unheard-of explosion of freedom, and this crazy belief that we are really starting something new." Stalin, on the other hand, functions for Zizek as a kind of stock gag. "It doesn't mean that he's glorifying Stalin," his friend Eric Santner says. "In part, what he means is that there is no avoidance of the complexities of entering into a power struggle—that the left can't just occupy a position of critique, and that there are risks involved. I think that is what Stalin as a signifier means for him." Zizek's book "Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?" argues against conflating Stalinism with Nazism; he does, however, confess to a soft spot for Mussolini. "You know, the democrats in 1925 accused Mussolini: 'You want to rule Italy, but you don't have any program,'" he says. "You know what was his answer? 'We do have a program: our program is to rule Italy at any price.' I love Mussolini—a great guy, sadly seduced later by Hitler."

Zizek likes to think of himself as deeply politically incorrect, delights in calling himself a male chauvinist, and flamboyantly fails to toe the line on gay-rights issues. "My highest defense of homosexuality would be that you prove it is unnatural, because this is truly spiritual," he says. "Any idiot can follow nature, but isn't the truly great thing to say, 'I love you so much that I break all the laws of nature for you'?" Unfortunately for Zizek, his peers remain unpersuaded of his essential bad nature. Gayatri Spivak, a professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia, says, "I've said to him, 'Slavoj, you have a politically correct soul, and you are deeply suspicious of it.' If he ever does say something that is very boldly politically incorrect, he tells you that he's doing it. I think that, at the end of the day, he is even susceptible to feminism." And when Zizek invokes Stalin or Lenin or Communism in a lecture, he is met with knowing chuckles, since no one could possibly be so unsophisticated as to take him literally. No one, that is, except the odd elderly gentleman with actual experience of totalitarian Europe, a type of whom there are fewer and fewer.

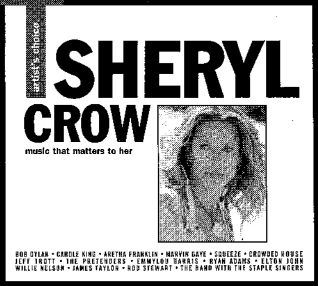
Some weeks ago, Zizek touched down in New York for a couple of days. In addition to shopping for Playmobil products for his younger son at Toys R Us in Times Square—"I look so Eastern European, carrying around these big shopping bags," he said—the main purpose of the trip was to deliver a lecture at Deitch Projects, a gallery in SoHo. The lecture took place on a bitterly cold evening, and the white-painted, hangarlike gallery was unheated, but this did not deter the crowd of six hundred or so, huddled in hipster winter garb of long black coats and peculiar headgear of Peruvian or Russian provenance. In fact, there were more would-be attendees than the gallery's security guards could handle, and dozens were refused entry. Rather than going away, they massed at the gallery's windows and periodically banged on them to be let in, lending the event an air of anticipation less suited to an academic lecture than to a rare appearance by an obscure but essential Belgian techno d.j.

Because Zizek had been provided with a chair and a table rather than a lectern, he was hidden from the sight of most of his audience. His presence consisted of an amplified, disembodied voice filled with hesitations, stops and starts, as if he were constantly expecting to be interrupted, like a nervous guest at a cocktail party. He began by showing some clips from Hitchcock films, which were out of the planned order—"I'm sorry, this has never happened to me before," he said, in the embarrassed manner of a disappointing lover—and which were subtitled in Slovene, which Zizek described as an "obscenity." He was so absorbed in giving a Lacanian interpretation of Hitchcock's frequent resort to what he called "the perplexed gaze" that he seemed unaware of the arrival of a police car on the street outside, its flashing blue light flickering over dejected faces, a cop with a megaphone ordering everyone to move on.

Zizek performed much of the same material that had gone down so well in Chicago—the chocolate-egg riff, jokes about Christian indulgence disguised as renunciation ("Become a celibate Catholic priest and you can have all the small boys you want"), the line about the Bamian Buddhas. Eventually, though, he turned to more pressing issues. "You probably saw the movie 'Minority Report,' in which people are arrested before they commit the crime," he said. "Why does this sound familiar? This is the new model for international relations. The U.S. state knows in advance who will attack you." This, Zizek said, was the effect of the war on terror. "The terrorist attack is taken for granted, but endlessly postponed," he said. "The true catastrophe is that we are living under a permanent threat of catastrophe."

Zizek was against the war in Iraq, he said, but not, as so many of his colleagues in the academy argued, because there was insufficient reason to attack Iraq. He suggested that the United States had adduced too many reasons. "What if the true purpose of the war is to pass to a global emergency state?" he said. "What worries me is that I see all around the signs of what I am tempted to call a silent revolution. This worries me even more than the big, explosive event." The fact that torture has become a legitimate subject of conversation was an example of this kind of creeping social change; it would be a mistake, he said, to understand this shift as simply the necessary means to the desired end of deposing Saddam Hussein. "It is not that the ends justify the means; the end is the means themselves," Zizek said. He seemed to be almost sorry that he couldn't find a way to endorse the war, and disappointed to be obliged to align himself with a simplistic antiwar movement. Even to Zizek, it seemed, pointing out paradoxes was an inadequate, if essential, response. "Iraq is a bad country—why not attack it?" he said. "But it is because of what an attack means that I oppose it." He sounded as perplexed and as helpless as any less learned observer of the political moment.

After the talk, as some of his audience darted off, Zizek invited questions. Word gradually got around that there were refreshments on a balcony level at the other end of the gallery, and, as Zizek continued to speak, the rows of seats grew more depleted. An hour passed; by then Zizek had moved on from Iraq and was telling old gags from the socialist era—three men walk into a Siberian prison camp, that sort of thing—while the drone from the balcony, with its twin distractions of wine and cheese, swelled, until the chatter of those who had succeeded in gaining entry was as loud as the banging of those who had been left out in the cold. ♦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SHOUTS & MURMURS

ANIMALS ALL AROUND US

BY JACK HANDEY

Most people don't realize there is an unseen, mysterious world all around us.

No, I'm not talking about the world of invisible scary monsters. I am talking about the world of bizarre little animals that live alongside us right in our homes. They inhabit our clothing, our furniture, our piles of old rags, our pans of dripping rainwater—even our bodies themselves.

Some of these creatures are so microscopic that you can barely even see them. Others are bigger, but you probably can't see them without your glasses, if you wear them.

We usually don't even notice these animals, but they're there. Take, for instance, the little creatures that are constantly flying around our heads all day. These, it turns out, are houseflies. They can live off the scraps of food that fall from our mouths while chewing. And they are able to reproduce right in the house, in dog droppings.

Or consider an even smaller animal, which lives unnoticed among the hairs of our private regions. These are called crabs. No, don't worry, they aren't actual crabs. And they certainly aren't large enough to eat, unless you could somehow get thousands of them. But they are with us, year after year.

Have you ever noticed how old chili beans and ground-up pieces of potato chips will magically seem to move around on the living-room carpet? This is actually caused by ants. Ants? Don't they live in caves or something? That's what I used to think. If you look closely, though, you can see them almost everywhere.

Some animals are masters of disguise. What you may think are raisins, stuck to your legs after hours of lying on the couch, are often what scientists call leeches. Where do they come from? Where don't they come from is more like it. Most often, we pick them up wading through the basement.

Some organisms even manage to get into our appliances and live there undisturbed. These are rats. Many times, the only clue to their presence is a zapping noise, some smoke, and a smell that can linger for weeks.

Incredibly, some little animals are able to infiltrate the very liquids we drink. They are called yeast, and we consume them by the billions, hour after hour, every day.

Although some of these creatures are tiny and unobtrusive, others are not. When you get up in the middle of the night for more bites of the chicken drumstick you left on the counter, you may have to fight a raccoon for it. One reason we rarely notice these furry interlopers is that they usually live in the basement or the attic and get into the kitchen through holes in the floor or the ceiling. Also, a lot of times when we fight them we're drunk, and later we think we imagined it.

You might suppose that at least when you climb into bed you would be free of the animal kingdom. But suppose again. There, too, they are watching us, crawling on us, waiting for the opportunity to bite. These are our cats, swarming over us throughout the night.

Through millions of years of evolution, animals have adapted to thrive in every corner of our world, from our empty Cup-a-Soup containers to the dried-up branches and dusty ornaments of our Christmas trees. They inhabit the bristles of our toothbrushes, the bristles of our whiskers, and the bristles of our other areas.

The temptation is to want to do something about them. But what? You can throw cats off the bed, but they just jump right back on. Virtually every kind of alcoholic beverage has yeast swimming in it. You can scrub the crabs off your body, but what are you going to do about your bedsheets, or your sweatpants? Wash *them*, too? You could drive yourself crazy.

It's true that some of these invaders can be harmful. One animal in particular can literally eat its way through the wood that holds the house together. This is the common beaver. He is attracted to the water overflowing from our basements, which he tries to dam up. Another harmful pest is the moth, which can eat holes in your clothing and fly in your mouth when you're taking a nap.

But many of the creatures living in our homes can be beneficial. Take drifters, for example. Sometimes they will go to the store to get you things (although they usually "lose" the change). Termites will often leave piles of sawdust around, which can be used to soak up stains. And mice entertain us by playing musical instruments. No, wait, I'm thinking of cartoon mice.

Even if we could get rid of all these animals with a magic wand, would we want to? Yes, of course we would—why would you even ask that? Maybe the best answer, as with most things, is just to do nothing at all.

However, that's not what the health department thinks. They have hit me with a large fine and ordered me to "clean up" my property. Ultimately, though, we have to ask ourselves: Do we want to live in some soulless antiseptic world ruled by futuristic robots, where dishes are cleaned every day and sinks and toilets are an eerie, gleaming white? I don't think that we do. I think people would rather live in homes where animals roam wild and free, in our hair, in our bags of things, and in our underpants. ♦

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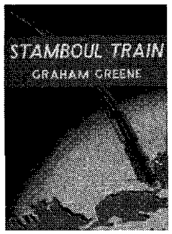

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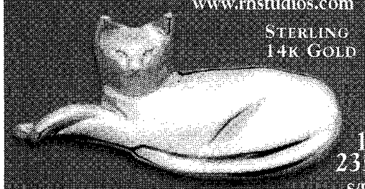

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

THE PEOPLE ON THE BUS

The way we ride now.

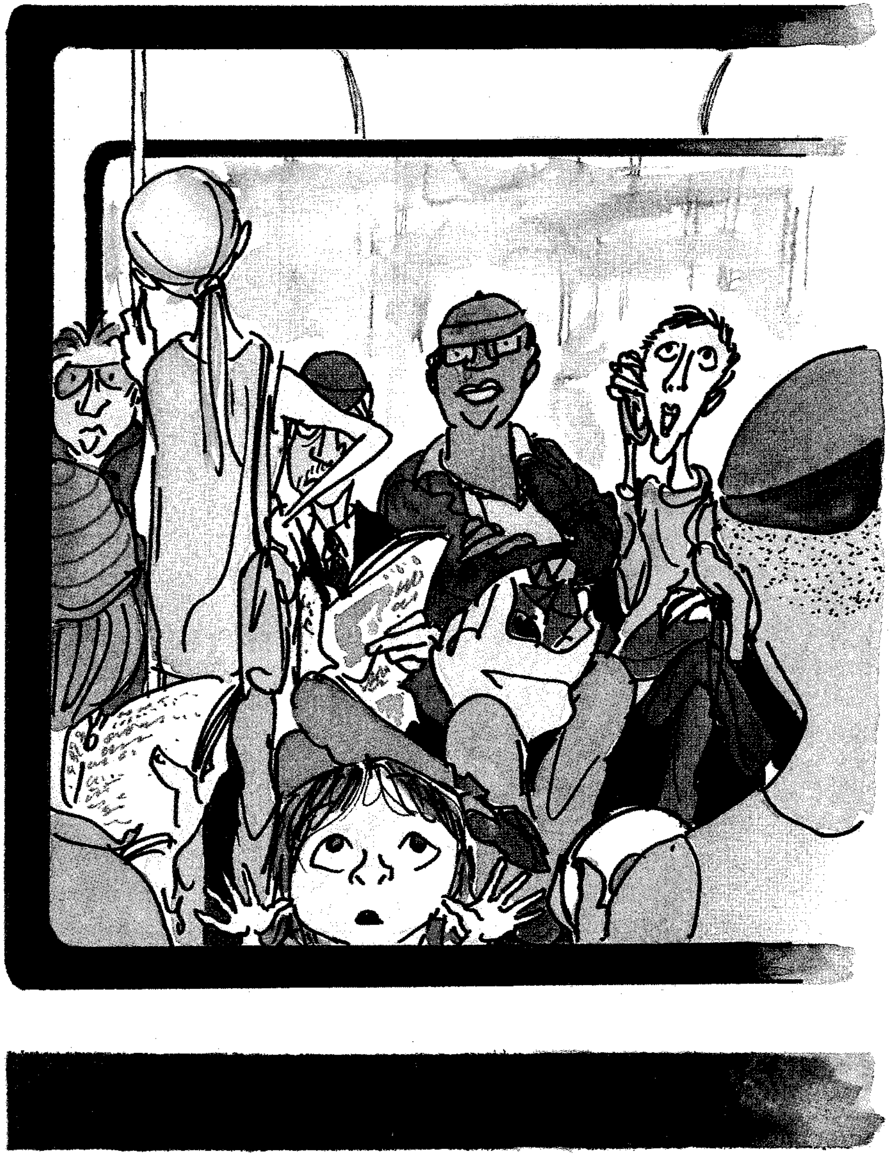
BY ADAM GOPNIK

Lately, I like to ride the bus. I don't mean the double-decker tourist buses that, half empty, warily circle the city, like dazed displaced troop carriers, or the long-distance buses that come sighing into the Port Authority Terminal, where it is eternally 3 A.M. and everyone looks exhausted before the journey starts, or even the yellow-and-blacks that still delicately deliver children from downtown to uptown at eight in the morning. I mean the ordinary city buses, those vaguely purposeless-looking, bulbous-faced, blue-and-bone M2s and 3s and 4s and 5s that chug up and down the avenues and along the cross streets, wheezing and whining, all day and night.

For twenty-odd years in New York, I never rode the bus at all—not, at least, after a single, traumatic bus experience. On the very first day I visited Manhattan, in the anxious (though, looking back, mostly unfrightened) summer of 1978—the summer when Jimmy Carter turned down the air-conditioning all over town—I got on a bus outside the Metropolitan Museum, saw that the fare was fifty cents, and, with the unquenchable cheerfulness of the visiting Canadian, proudly pulled out a dollar bill—an American dollar bill—folded it up neatly, stuffed the dollar in the fare box, two fares, and looked up, expecting the driver to beam at my efficiency. I will never forget his look of disbelief and disgust, mingled, I think, with a certain renewed awe at the enormities that out-of-towners were capable of.

From that day on, I don't think I ever rode another bus. I suppose I must have; transportational logic says that I must have—there must be a crosstown M86 or an uptown limited in there somewhere—but, if I did, I don't know when. Even if I had been on a bus, I don't think I would recall it. Bus-blindness is a standard New York illness; of all the regularities of life here, the bus is the least celebrated, the least inclined to tug at the heart, or be made into a symbol of our condition. The taxi has its checkered lore, the subway its legend, the limo a certain Michael Douglas-in-"Wall Street" icon quality—but if there is a memorable bus scene in literature, or an unforgettable moment in a movie that takes place on a New York City bus, I have not found it. (If you Google New York buses in movie scenes, you end up with a bus-enthusiasts' site and a shot of a New York City bus from a Sylvester Stallone movie called "Driven," and this bus turns out to be dressed up like a Chicago city bus, and filmed on location in Toronto.) There is nothing about buses that makes them intrinsically symbol-repellent: the London bus has a poetry as rich as the Tube's—there is Mary Poppins, there is Mrs. Dalloway. In Paris, Pascal rides the bus, Zazie rides the Métro, and that is, evenly, that. But as a symbolic repository the New York City bus does not exist. The only significant symbolic figure that the New York bus has had is Ralph Kramden, and what he symbolizes about the bus is that being stuck in one is in itself one more form of comic frustration and disappointment; the New York City bus might best be described by saying that it is exactly the kind of institution that would have Ralph Kramden as its significant symbolic figure.

If you had asked me why I avoided the bus, I suppose I would have said that the bus was for old people—or that taking the bus was one step short of not actually living in New York at all, and that if you stayed on the bus long enough it would take you right out of town. Riding the bus was one of those activities, like going to Radio City, that was in New York but not really of it. My mother-in-law rode the bus when she came to New York to visit, and that, I thought, said whom the bus was made for: elegant older women who didn't mind travelling forty-five minutes every morning to visit their grandchildren.



"The bus lets you feel that you're in control, or that someone's in control," a woman said.

JULES FEIFFER

And then I didn't ride the bus because I loved the subway so. Compared with the vivid and evil and lurid subway, the bus seemed a drab bourgeois necessity—Shirley Booth to the subway's Tallulah Bankhead. When I began to ride the subway, particularly in the late seventies and early eighties, it was both grander and stranger than a newcomer can imagine now. The graffiti, for one thing, were both more sordid inside—all those "tags"—and more beautiful outside. When the wild-style cars came roaring into a station, they were as exciting and shimmering as Frank Stella birds. The air-conditioning was a lot spottier, too, and sometimes the windows were open, driving the stale and fetid air around in an illusion of cooling. When the air-conditioning worked, it was worse. You walked from steam bath to refrigerator, a change like a change of continents, and your perspiration seemed to freeze within your shirt, a phenomenon previously known only to Antarctic explorers.

Feral thugs and killer nerds rode the subway together, looking warily at one another. And yet there was something sublime about the subway. Although it was incidentally frightening, it was also systematically reassuring: it shouldn't have worked; it had stopped working; and yet it worked—vandalized, brutalized, a canvas and a pissoir, it reliably took you wherever you wanted to go. It was a rumbling, sleepless, snorting animal presence underfoot, more a god to be appeased and admired than a thing that had been mastered by its owners. If the stations seemed, as people said, Dantesque, that was not simply because the subway was belowground, and a punishment, but also because it offered an architectural order that seemed to be free from any interfering human hand, running by itself in its own grim circles. It was religious in the narrow sense as well: terror and transportation were joined together, fear propelled you to a higher plane. (The taxis, an alternative if you had the money, were alarming then, too—a silent or determined driver in a T-shirt resting on a mat of beads and demanding, fifty blocks before your destination, which side of the street you wanted—without being at all sublime.)

Coming home in 2000 after five years abroad, I took it for granted that I would return to the subway and the taxi, only to be stunned by the transformation in them both. The subway, now graffiti free, with dully gleaming metal cars (though obviously made to be as resistant to vandalism as a prison), had recorded announcements, and for a while a picture of the station manager at every stop. It seemed obviously improved but somehow degraded, grimly utilitarian, intended to suggest the receding future vision of "RoboCop": automatic voices encased in armor. The chaos was gone from inside the cabs, and held on only around them. After five years in Paris, where one phones for a cab or lines up in an orderly manner at a station, logically and fairly, I nearly wept tears of frustration at the anarchy of the street system—you waited for fifteen minutes and someone waltzed out into the middle of the block and stepped in front of you as a cab approached. (There is, of course, an implicit system of fair dealing in this—one block away is legitimate; the same corner is not—but I could no longer remember the rules, much less find the patience to practice them.)

And so the bus. Almost every day for the past year and a half, I've found myself taking a limited bus down an East Side avenue, and then, a few hours and frustrations later, taking it back uptown on the adjoining avenue. I stand or, in good hours, sit among the usual bus riders. The bus I find humane, in several ways. There is, first of all, the non-confrontational and yet collaborative nature of the seating. You look over people's shoulders, closely, and yet only rarely look directly at them, face to face, as you must on the subway. There is a hierarchy of seating on the bus, far more articulate than that of the subway. There are seats you must give up to handicapped people, seats you ought to give up to handicapped people if you have any decency at all, and seats—the bumpy, exhaust-scented row in the very back—that you never have to give up to anyone, if you're willing to sit there. (The reason for all those designated spaces is that law and propriety dictate that when someone in a wheelchair rolls up to a bus stop, the bus has to stop and let him on.) There is also on almost every New York bus a little single seat tucked in near the back door, which has the air of a dunce chair in a classroom. You can sit there, but you wouldn't want to. Late at night, there is even a policy of optional stops. You ask the driver to stop the bus where you're going and, if he can, he will.

The bus also has order, order as we know it from the fading patriarchal family, visible order kept by an irritable chief. The driver has not only control over his world but the delight of the exercise of arbitrary authority, like that of a French bureaucrat. Bus riders learn that, if your MetroCard turns out to be short fifty cents, the driver will look at you with distaste, tell you to find change from fellow-passengers (surprisingly, to a subway rider, people dig into their purses cheerfully), and, if this doesn't work, will wearily wave you on back. You are included, fool though you are, and this often at the moment when the driver is ignoring the pounded fists and half-audible pleas for admission of the last few people who, running for the bus, arrived a second too late. The driver's control of the back door is just as imperious. A red zone of acceptability exists around the bus stop, known only to the driver, who opens and closes the door as he senses the zone appearing and receding.

It is uniquely possible to overhear conversations on the bus. The other morning, for instance—a beautiful morning of our time, the sky blue, the alert orange, and the *Times* sports pages ominously upside down—a man behind me was trying to remember the names of popular Drake's snacks from his childhood.

"What are those things? There were Ring-Dings and Drake's cakes."

"You mean Twinkies," the man he was with said, with assurance. I couldn't see either face, but their voices had the peaceable quarrelsomeness of those who have just passed from middle-aged to elderly.

"No, I don't mean Twinkies," he said angrily. "I mean them other things."

Long pause. We couldn't resist. "Devil Dogs," someone said. "Devil Dogs."

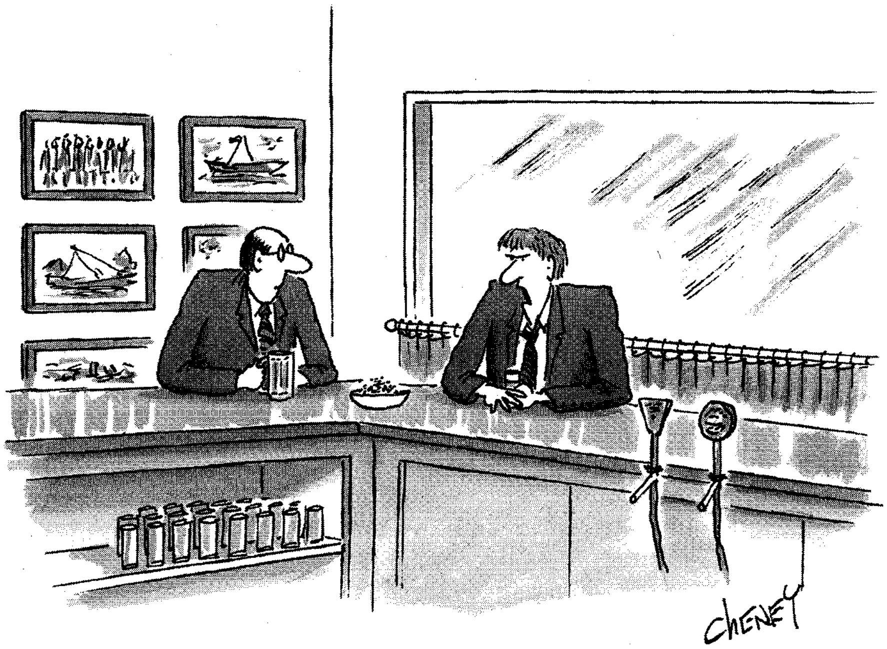
"Yes, thanks, Devil Dogs. How come you don't ever see Devil Dogs these days?"

This is a typical bit of bus talk. (In a taxi you would stew on the issue all by yourself. The millionaire in his limo could ask the driver, I suppose, but he would be too embarrassed to answer. On the subway, no one would hear, in the first place; and if the words "Devil Dog" were said with enough emphasis to be heard, it would cause a panicked mass exodus.) On another morning, a man and a woman were riding together down Fifth Avenue and saw the new, comically twinned, comically misnamed AOL Time Warner Center—the Delusional States Building, as it will doubtless someday be known—come into view. (And those two towers rising, however plainly, have become a source of pride: *something's* rising.) "That Trump," the man said, chuckling. "He always does things in twos. Have you ever noticed how he always does things in twos?"

"I've noticed that. That's his thing, his signature, doing two of everything."

"Well, there he does it again. Two towers again."

Sage nods. The fact that, as it occurred to me later, the towers are not by Trump, and that, in any case, Trump, in his long career, has never done two of anything, should not diminish the glory of this exchange. If you were on the subway, there would be nothing to look at; if you were in a limo, you would actually be Trump, building things, gloriously, in nonexistent pairs.



"My wife ran off with the guy who stole my identity."

When I first started riding the bus, I mentioned it to people sheepishly, almost apologetically, as one might mention having had a new dental plate put in, or the advantages of low-fat yogurt—as one might mention something that, though not downright shameful, might still seem mildly embarrassing. But, to my surprise, almost everyone I talked to (and women, I think, in particular) turned out to feel the same way I do about the bus. "The bus lets you feel that you're in control, or that someone's in control," one woman said to me, and another friend said flatly, "You can see what's coming." The bus feels safe. Of course, there is no reason for the bus to feel safe. (A friend from Jerusalem got on the bus with understandable watchfulness.) Yet we have decided to create in the city a kind of imaginary geography of fear and safety that will somehow make us safer from It—from the next attack, of course, from the Other Shoe, the Dreadful Thing that we all await.

I have thought about it a lot while I

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Veni, Vidi, da Vinci

The scandal now speeding through the news wires should have been devastating. Not to everyone, certainly, but to him personally, or professionally, at the least. When the word finally reached Section C, Page 5 of *The Bugle and Star*, Kevin's reaction that sunny morning was not what he would have expected.

It was not so long ago that Kevin had set foot on the plane to Italy to launch the final stage of his grand plan. While everyone crowding around him in the narrow skybridge seemed disposed to the wait, Kevin was flipping the lock on his briefcase with a rabid thumb. Open. Then closed. Open. Then closed. Open. His thoughts bounced between his ambitious itinerary and the word "skybridge." The word seemed fake—made purely for utility and without the smudge of human longing. Precisely what occupied that half of Kevin's thoughts was the airline employee's unflagging faith in the word. When she had invited passengers to board, "skybridge" was delivered without a hint of obligation or the tiniest suggestion of a suppressed desire for rebellion. Good worker, Kevin concluded. And gave her a mental gold star.

Of course, the trip to Italy was all work for Kevin as well. Little in his life wasn't. He found great satisfaction in that fact. He had achieved all the goals scribbled by flashlight in the front leaf of his junior year high school yearbook (the list he drafted in one glorious moment of foresight and, for his age, megalomania). He had all the degrees he'd dreamt of, all the reassuring press notices of a great mind and a promising future, and more lapel pins than he had lapels. He was the preeminent junior geologist at the institute and was well on his way to becoming the youngest director in its history.

His pursuit of that last distinction was the sole reason for his journey. For years, he had been secretly following a thread of geological theory that could handily overturn every article of standing knowledge about rocks and their place in the universe. The theory was complex and incomprehensible to anyone outside of the geology community, and was considered absurd by most of those within it. To Kevin, it was perfectly lucid and required only one simple fact to be proved beyond a doubt. He had committed ten years of Saturday afternoons and Tuesday midnights to his pursuit of that one fact. Then while standing by the microwave reading a box of spaghetti, he had alighted on his answer.

"The abundance of Italy's treasures beholds more than delicious heat'n'serve pasta. Italy is also the birthplace of such resplendent delights as the famous Parmesan cheese, robust Chianti wines, and the wonderful art of the Renaissance." To make the point clear, the box provided a list of magnificent and delightful art, including a tiny reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's landscape drawing of 1473. The pasta box noted that it was Leonardo's first dated work and offered a marvelously accurate view of the Arno valley. For Kevin, this view was indeed marvelous.

For reasons most non-geologists would rather not be burdened with and most geologists would wave off as foolish, Leonardo's picture was exactly what Kevin had been seeking. There in the broken, rushed pen strokes of the master's hand lay the cornerstone Of Kevin's theory, and his certain rise to celebrity. Or so he thought. He would need to study the drawing at length in person. The following Monday he would be found fidgeting on a skybridge.

Kevin had not traveled much. His geological expertise was founded on the rich mineral deposits in the state—the county—where he had always lived. He had attended many conferences and given lectures in many conference rooms. He might have been ashamed to admit that this was his first trip abroad, but he never said so.

Instead he hired a travel agent to plan his lodging and transportation and set out to secure all the necessary appointments to study the da Vinci drawing.

When he arrived at the center of Florence by taxi, his attention was not drawn to the rise of the Duomo over the rooftops or the statuary in ecstasy overhead. He did, in passing, consider the dark rough-hewn stone of the buildings and made a note to find a book on that sometime. He reviewed his preparation notes and called his contact at the Galleria degli Ufizzi to confirm that he had arrived. His hotel room had a large window that overlooked the city and he was pleased to find that it was also furnished with full-length curtains. He shut them and returned to his books.

It was not an easy night for Kevin. The scooters and teenagers on the street below were loud, and being pestered with anticipation of his imminent stardom, he barely slept an hour, if that. He rose with the sun and left the hotel before the complimentary breakfast had been laid out. He arrived at the museum an hour before his appointment, after a slight delay looking for the entrance while wandering a large plaza with statues. The guard let him in and gave him a pass to the galleries. He paced the rooms, sifting the coins in his pocket, trying to expel his eagerness.

Something caught his eye. That painting of a woman standing in a seashell. The colors where fascinating—the color of the robe held by her attendant, in particular, reminded him of pink topaz, his favorite of the metasomatites. But this robe held more than just the general pink of the stone—it was the color of a particular pink topaz in the light of a cloudless dawn. In California. On a beach in Mendocino. It was the color of topaz at the moment of discovery, as if found glinting in the sun on the morning after a great dinner party where they served lobster and squash blossoms. The wine was local. And so was the champagne. Both had peach undertones with a touch of blackberry and verbena. He made a joke that made everyone laugh. Kevin read the label next to the painting: The Birth of Venus, Sandro Botticelli, tempera on canvas. That was all? There seemed to be alchemy at work here. He tried to reason how pigment on cloth could bring such assorted memories to mind. Were they memories? Hopes maybe. Then something else caught his eye.

Something had changed. Kevin now saw more than stone gray. He was late for his appointment, but only by ten minutes. For the next two weeks, he dutifully reported to the Uffizi and spent six or eight hours studying da Vinci's drawing, noting and cross-referencing every geological detail to be found in Leonardo's lines. In an unexpected turn, he found himself spending all his free time prowling the museum's galleries, then the city's streets, then the surrounding hills feeding a newborn lust for color. He visited the Carmine Chapel and stared at a square inch of plastered wall for an hour. He craned his neck to gawk at an angel's foot on the ceiling of San Lorenzo. He let waves of . . . what? thoughts? dreams? . . . engulf him while contemplating the blue of a Mantegna sky. His studies of the da Vinci drawing were conclusive and Kevin returned home to publish his own masterpiece of geological observation. And it happened as he had planned: his theory was celebrated and he was named director of the institute. All because of a little-known fact found in hidden recesses of a draftsman's sketch.

So it should have been a cause for alarm when the news broke that the famous Leonardo da Vinci landscape drawing of 1473 in the collection of Galleria degli Ufizzi in Florence was in fact a forgery. What the museum held was a masterful photocopy. The news, arriving that sunny morning should have caused Kevin to collapse, or at least pound a fist. As it turns out, he looked up from the paper, out his kitchen window, and thought, maybe it doesn't matter.

This is a work of fiction, including the suggestion that the 1473 landscape drawing by Leonardo da Vinci at the Uffizi is a forgery. Any resemblance to actual people or events is entirely coincidental.

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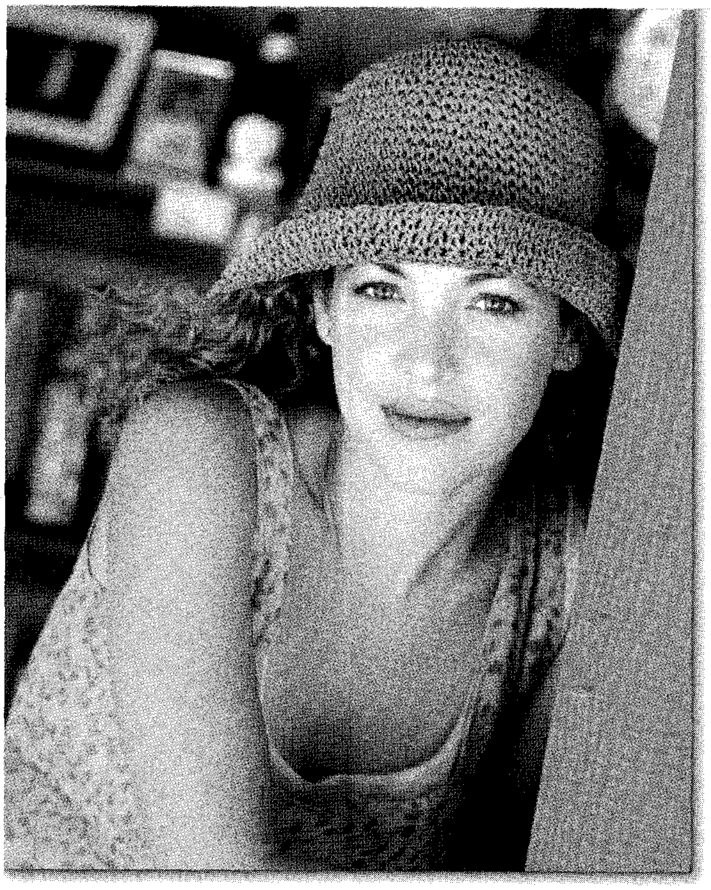

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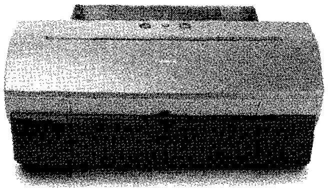

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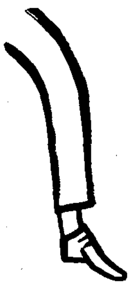
am riding the bus, and I have come to the conclusion that, while anxiety seeks out the company of excitement, fear seeks out the illusion of certainty. People tend to write these days about anxiety and fear as though they were equal, or anyway continuous, emotions, one blending into the other, but anyone who has felt them—and anyone who hasn't felt them, at least a little, hasn't been living in New York in the past year—knows that they are as distinct as a bus from a subway, as a Devil Dog from a Ring-Ding. Anxiety is the ordinary New York emotion. It is a form of energy, and clings, like ivy to a garden wall, to whatever is around to cling to, whether the object is nationalism or the Knicks or Lizzie Grubman, as readers of the New York *Post* recognize. At the height of the bubble, anxiety was all around us: the anxiety of keeping up, of not falling behind, of holding one's place.



Fear, well earned or not, is a different thing. People who live with the higher kinds of fear—the ill, soldiers—live with it mostly by making structures of delusional domesticity. They try to create an illusion of safety, and of home. At Waterloo, soldiers welcomed the little signs of farm-keeping evident around them; in the dugouts of the Somme, every rat-ridden alley had a designation and every rat itself a pet name. The last time New Yorkers were genuinely afraid, as opposed to merely anxious, during the great crime wave of the sixties and mid-seventies, they responded in the same way: by constructing an elaborate, learn-it-by-heart geography of safe and unsafe enclaves, a map of safe rooms. The knowledge that the map could not truly protect you from what you feared then, any more than riding the bus can save you from it now, did not alter the need to have a map. People say that twentysomethings have sex out of fear—it is called terror sex—but twentysomethings have sex out of sex, and the adjective of the decade is always attached to it. In the eighties, they had safe sex, and in the nineties boom sex, and they will have sex-among-the-ruins, if it comes to that.

What we have out of fear is not sex, or any other anxiety-energized activity, but stillness. It's said that people in the city are nicer now, or more coöperative, and I suppose this is true. But it is true for reasons that are not themselves entirely nice. The motivation of this niceness is less rectitude and reform than just plain old-fashioned fright. There are no atheists in foxholes, but there are no religious arguments in foxholes, either. The fear we feel isn't as immediate or as real as the fear soldiers feel. But our response is the same.

These structures of delusional domesticity are the mainstay of the lives of many of us in New York now. The bus, a permanently running dinner party among friends, a fiction of family for a dollar-fifty, a Starbucks on wheels, is the rolling image of the thing we dream of now as much as we wanted the Broadband Pipe to wash away our sins three years ago, and that is the Safe Room. For the first time, the bus has something to symbolize.

On the bus the other morning, the worst regularly scheduled thing that can happen on the bus happened. A guy in a wheelchair held things up for three minutes—no time at all, really, but an eternity on television, or in the subway, or, usually, in the city. As bus riders know, buses are equipped to stop and, by lowering a clever elevator device, let a wheelchair-bound rider board the bus. This, though a civic mitzvah, involves a sequence where the driver locks the front door, works the elevator at the rear door, hoists up the wheelchair on the lift, and then folds up the designated seats to give the wheelchair man room (it is nearly always a man). There is something artisanal, handmade about it—the lock, the voyage, working the elevator—in which a municipal employee is reduced, or raised, to a valet.

"It's the lame and the halt on the bus," one woman said.

"What's the difference between the lame and the halt?"

"The lame are, like, lame, and the halt, halt."

"You mean the halt don't walk."

"I mean they halt. But they halt because they're lame."

It is the kind of conversation—discursive, word-sensitive—that is possible on the bus right now, and nowhere else. I keep meaning to look up the difference. ♦

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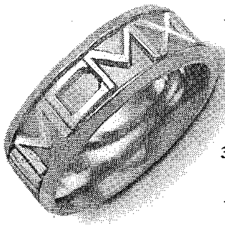

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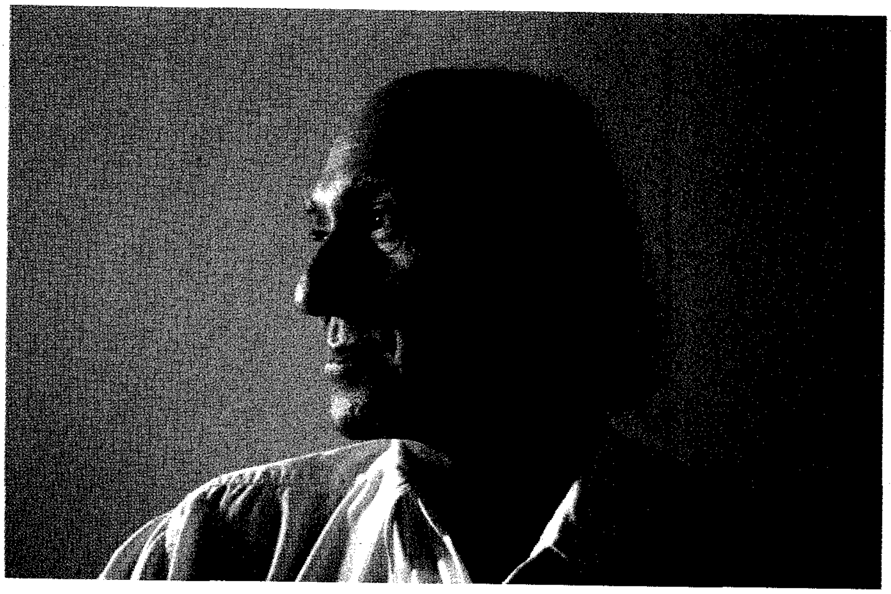
LETTER FROM BAGHDAD

SADDAM'S EAR

An Iraqi doctor had a unique role in Saddam Hussein's life.

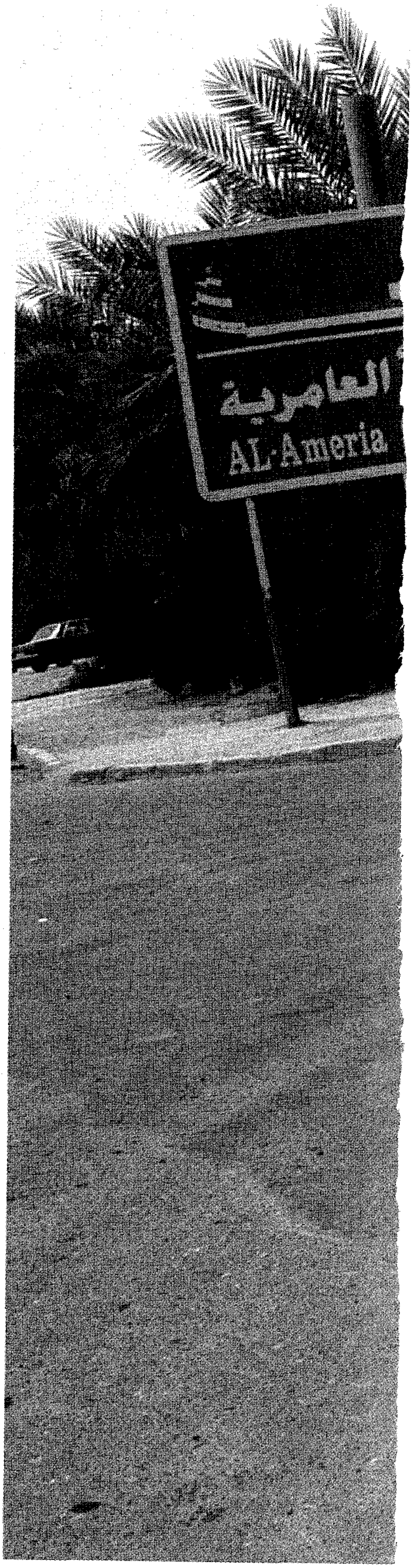
BY JON LEE ANDERSON



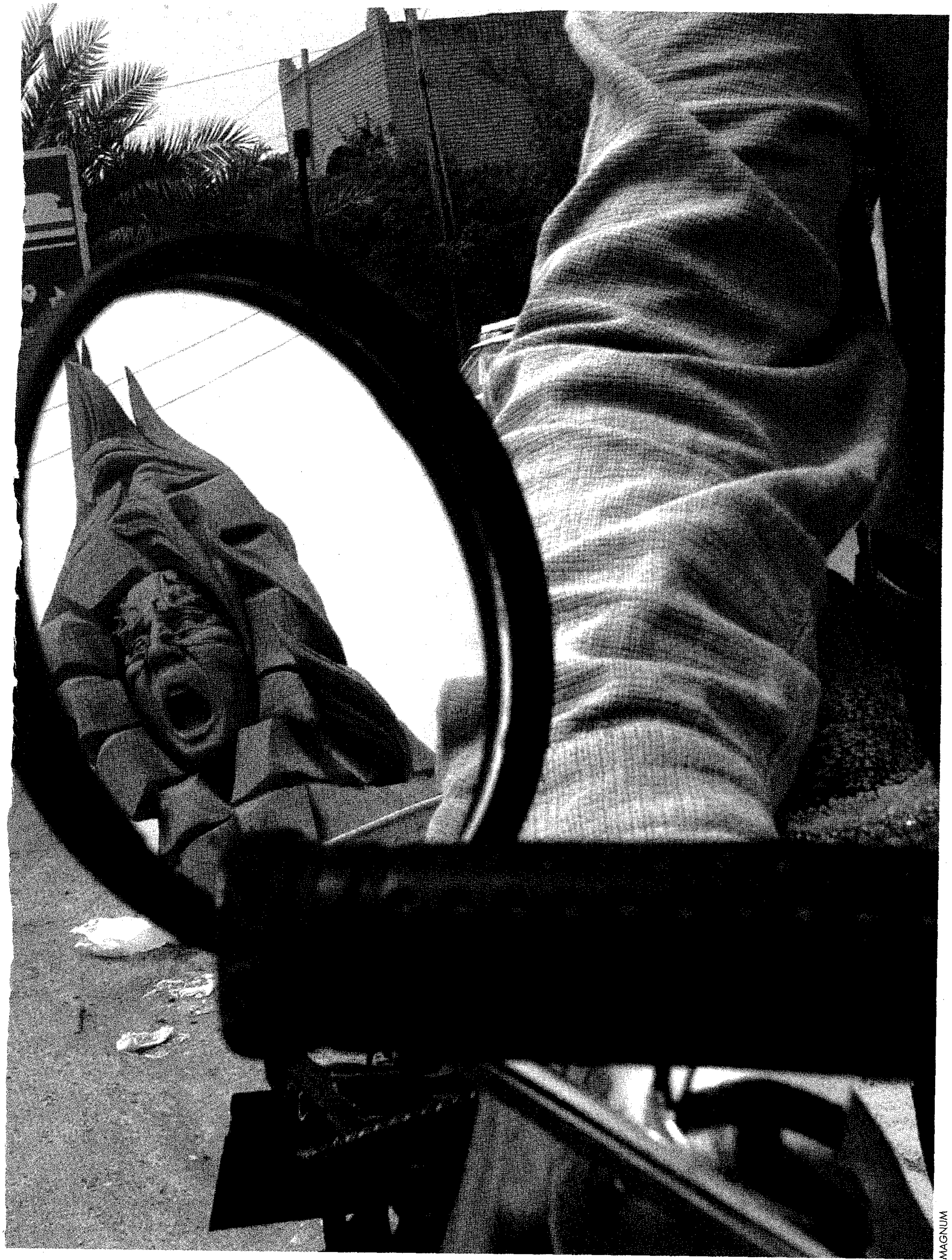
The day after the U.S. Army seized Saddam International Airport and renamed it Baghdad International, a man I knew, Dr. Ala Bashir, received a message from Saddam Hussein. Ala Bashir was a plastic surgeon who had had an unusually friendly relationship with Saddam for twenty years and was also a member of the medical team responsible for his care. He was the director of a small hospital, the Saddam Center for Reconstructive Surgery, on the east side of the Tigris, but one day each week he was on round-the-clock duty at Saddam's personal clinic, which had recently been moved from the Republican Palace complex, on the west side of the river, to a secret location that was unlikely to be targeted by American bombs. He was at the clinic on Friday, April 4th, the day the Americans took control of the airport. He went home early to look after his elderly mother, who was unwell, and the next day, Saturday, one of Saddam's guards came to his house and told him to pack his bags and return "immediately, immediately" to the clinic. The guard left, and Bashir soon followed. He didn't show up for work at the hospital the next day, and no one seemed to know where he was.

I heard about Bashir's disappearance a few days later, while the city was being sacked by looters, marines were searching a mosque where Saddam was said to be hiding, and thieves were absconding with most of the antiquities in the National Museum. I had gone to the hospital to see how Ala Bashir was doing. One of his colleagues, Dr. Walid, who had just finished operating on a wounded man, took me aside and said that he feared the worst.

I had met Ala Bashir in Baghdad in the summer of 2000, when I was given a letter of introduction to him by Naji Sabri Al Hadithi, who was then Saddam's ambassador in Vienna and was until recently—when he and the rest of the government disappeared—the Iraqi Foreign Minister. I visited Bashir in his office, and he talked to me about politics and history. He was an unusual-looking man. Most Baghdadis his age—he was then sixty-one—are rotund and pale-skinned. Bashir was tall and lithe, and his skin was a walnut-brown color. He had a large beaked nose, and his face was clean-shaven, which was also unusual among Iraqi men, who generally have thick mustaches. But the most distinc-



Dr. Ala Bashir, at left, is also an artist. One



is public monuments memorializes the victims of the bombing of an air-raid shelter. Photographs by Thomas Dworzak.

tive thing about his appearance was his hair, which hung in a long white fringe from the sides and the back of his otherwise bald head. Most Iraqi men have neat haircuts or, possibly, if they are young, shaved heads with a little bristle visible—the Uday Hussein look. Bashir dressed in a distinctive way, also, often in a brown corduroy suit, which is a very un-Iraqi thing to wear.

Ala Bashir had a quiet and self-effacing manner, and he talked about how Saddam was doing the best he could for his country, and made some remarks to the effect that Adolf Hitler had got a bad rap from historians. I quoted his comments in an article I wrote about Iraq, and when I returned to Baghdad late last year I went to see Bashir again. He said that I had perhaps "overemphasized" his remarks about Hitler, but he didn't bear a grudge, and we met two or three more times. Just before I was to leave, he asked me to meet him in a neutral place, and suddenly and unexpectedly he began to talk, in a low voice, about how fearful Iraqis were. He never mentioned Saddam's name, but he spoke about political repression, executions and disappearances, and how no one could ever say what was truly on his mind. I knew that he was taking a risk in saying these things, and I steered the conversation back to mundane matters. When I went to see him a few days later, to say goodbye, I intentionally did so formally, in front of several of his colleagues.

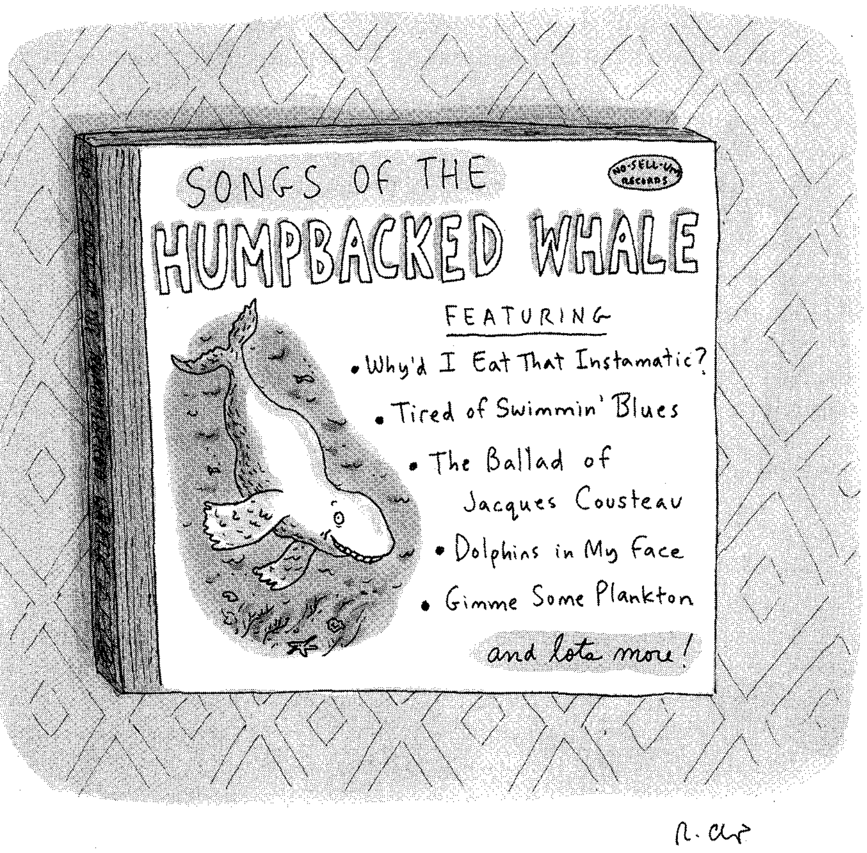
In February, a month before the war began, I was back in Baghdad, and Bashir and I met quite often, sometimes in his office. If there were other people there—Bashir had many visitors—our conversations were fairly superficial, like those between polite friends, and dealt with topics of current interest, such as the looming war. I also went to his home for dinner several times, and to the home of a friend of his, Samir Khairi Tawfik, who was then a senior official at the Foreign Ministry. Bashir lived in a Western-style house, built in the nineteen-sixties, in the Al Jihad neighborhood of southwestern Baghdad. Two Mercedes sedans and a Hyundai S.U.V. were parked in the carport. None of them were new, and they seemed never to be driven. (Bashir usually travelled in a chauffeur-driven, government-issue Toyota Land Cruiser.) The curtains of the house were always drawn, and the place seemed rather forlorn. Bashir's wife and his daughter, who is twenty-three, were in Amman, and he had told them to stay there until the war was over. He had four children, the first two of whom, both boys, were born in England, where he had worked as a surgeon in the early nineteen-seventies, after receiving a degree from the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. His two eldest sons lived in England now, and another son studied music in France. There were family pictures on the wall in the living room, among them a recent one of a smiling toddler grandson and, in a discreet corner, a framed portrait of Bashir standing at some public function with Saddam Hussein. It was the only image of Saddam I saw there.

Most of the art in the house was made by Bashir, who was an eminent painter and sculptor as well as a medical doctor. He had received commissions for several large public monuments in Baghdad, including a prominent one at the memorial to the attack in 1991 on the Amiriya air-raid shelter, where an American bomb killed more than four hundred people, most of them women and children. Bashir's art, unlike that of most contemporary Iraqi artists, was rooted in Surrealism, and much of it was symbolically foreboding. The gruesome, Medusa-like bronze of an androgynous human face grimacing in pain at the Amiriya memorial is a terrifying piece. Bashir said that there was nothing else like it in Baghdad because Saddam preferred literal, figurative art. But he let Bashir do pretty much what he wanted. We drove out one day to a traffic circle at the southern edge of Baghdad, where Bashir's most recent large piece stands. It consists of two sensuously joined blocks of cut limestone, about thirty feet high, the shape of one resembling, by design, Bashir said, a woman's back. He said that he had titled it "The Union," but that it was officially called "The Union Between the Leader and His People." He shrugged. It didn't really matter what it was called. At least he had managed to avoid putting a statue of Saddam in front of it, which several officials had requested, or adding a replica of one of Saddam's fists.

Bashir didn't speak freely to me about Saddam Hussein very often, but once or twice, when we were alone in his house, he described the terrified sycophants who surrounded the President, and his pathological, "worthless" sons, and the curious affection he seemed to feel for Bashir. "Even his brother Barzan"—the former intelligence chief and Saddam's personal banker—"who is a friend of mine, says I am blessed by God to speak to his brother in the way I do. No one else can or does. Even his own family is afraid of him." But Bashir also said that most of the people he knew, including some high-ranking generals and ministers, wanted a change, and would be angry if Bush decided not to invade. If Saddam stayed in power, "it would be a victory for dictatorship, for murder, for torture and bloodshed." He had travelled to many countries, and he knew of no crueller place than Iraq: "Some of the things that have been done to people over the years are beyond any description."

Bashir's relationship to Saddam made him a very influential person in Baghdad. When my visa was about to expire, he called the Iraqi Information Ministry. He did this in front of me, in his office, speaking in Arabic. "As it happened," he said later, "they were reviewing your application just as I called. I told them that you were a friend of mine." He laughed. "Anyway, they will put down my name on your application letter as the person recommending you." I never again had a problem renewing my visa, and I noticed that officials took note of Ala Bashir's name on my forms, and seemed impressed.

As the weeks passed and the war drew nearer, and the authorities became increasingly censorious of journalists' movements, I tried to be more judicious about our meetings. We discussed this. I suggested that since I had a back ailment, I might use treatments for it as a cover. Bashir gave me a prescription for some drugs and arranged for sessions with a physical therapist in the hospital next door to his. This worked for the first two weeks of the war, by which time agents from the secret intelligence apparatus run by Qusay Hussein, Saddam's younger son, had taken over the Information Ministry and severely restricted journalists' activities. I would drop in to see Bashir and we would chat for several minutes, and that was all. I noticed, however, that we were never alone anymore. I paid my last call about five days before the Americans entered Baghdad, and he was not there. I decided that it was not wise to return.



On Saturday, April 12th, a week after Bashir disappeared, Dr. Walid and I set out in my car on a circuitous route to Bashir's sister's house, which Walid thought was a good place to start looking for him, although neither of us really believed he would be there. I thought it was more likely that he was dead or, possibly, a fugitive on the run with Saddam. Gun battles between American soldiers and groups of fedayeen were still taking place here and there in Baghdad, and Sabah, my driver, skirted the dicey spots. Dr. Walid asked if we could stop first at his own family's home. His wife and children had gone to Samarra, a town to the north, on the way to Tikrit, and their house was empty, but neighbors had looked after it, and we found that it was intact, in spite of the looters who were driving up and down the road in front of it. Some of the neighbors had armed themselves, and shots rang out once or twice while we were there. People were firing their guns at passing vehicles, to scare them away. The road was also full of young men who looked as if they had been walking for hours. They were thirsty and hot. Dr. Walid stopped a couple of them, and they said that they were soldiers, although they had abandoned their uniforms. One said that he was coming from Kirkuk, and was on his way home to Basra, nearly three hundred miles to the south. He walked on.

Dr. Walid waved at some people in the garden of a house nearby, and they waved back. "This is remarkable," he said. "That house belonged to an old friend, Ali Bilal, whose son was picked up by Saddam's secret police in 1980, accused of what we don't know. He never returned, and the regime made the family leave the house. It has been twenty-three years since it was inhabited. Those people must be family members, but it has been so long, I don't recognize them." Some Arabic letters had been spray-painted on the front wall, and Dr. Walid translated them for me: "This is the house of Ali Bilal. His family returns with their heads held high." The doctor smiled, and repeated, over and over, "This is good. This is very good."

We drove through an intersection that was all shot up, and along some residential side streets into a middle-class neighborhood, negotiating a couple of ad-hoc roadblocks made out of stones and odds and ends and manned by local men, some with guns. Dr. Walid pointed excitedly at a house ahead of us and said, "That's it!"—the house of Bashir's sister. There were no cars in front. Dr. Walid got out of our car and went to the gate, where a young woman—Bashir's niece, I was told later—let him into the garden, and a few moments later he walked back, smiling broadly and waving for me to come in. Just then Ala Bashir came striding down the driveway. He, too, had a big smile. Bashir is normally a reticent, undemonstrative man, but he embraced me and kissed me on both cheeks. His clothes were rumpled and he hadn't shaved for several days. He apologized when I mentioned this, and I asked if he needed a razor. He said no, no, he had razors, but—and he waved his arms as if to say that everything that had happened to him was just too difficult to explain.

Bashir led us inside and we all sat down in the living room. He said that when Saddam's guard came for him "it meant that the President had asked for me, because this man deals directly with him." The guard had been tense, he said, and "I had the feeling that we were not really going to the clinic, and that if I went with him I might never return. Saddam had many secret places to hide." Bashir had been listening to the BBC, which was reporting that the airport had been taken, and he knew that the Americans were making incursions into the city. He told Saddam's guard to go on ahead and that he would leave for the clinic in a few minutes, but he didn't. He had his driver take him to his sister's house, because he was more or less confident that Saddam's people did not know its location. And he had been there ever since.

As we sat talking, Samir Khairi, the doctor's old friend from the now defunct Foreign Ministry, came by. They discussed the latest news: the Americans had bombed the family home, in the town of Ramadi, of Barzan Al Tikriti, Saddam's half brother. There was speculation that Barzan had been killed in the bombing, but Khairi assured me that it was not true and that Barzan was still alive. He did not say how he knew this. Both he and Bashir said they believed that Saddam was also alive. Bashir pointed out that the Adamiya mosque, where Saddam had been sighted on Wednesday, April 9th, was not far from Saddam's secret clinic. They were both situated along the river, which offered an avenue of escape. Upriver, in the country outside Baghdad, there was an area that was the fiefdom of a tribal leader who was a close ally of Saddam Hussein's.

I asked Bashir if he wanted to use my portable satellite phone, and we went out into the garden to get a clear signal. I dialled the number of his wife and daughter in Amman and handed him the phone when it began ringing, then walked away. His sister and her husband and children and Samir Khairi had come out of the house to watch. Bashir spoke in a soft, reassuring voice and laughed a lot during the conversation. When he handed the phone back to me, he said that his family was very relieved, since everyone had thought he was dead. "What is it about people, that they cry when they are happy?" he said, and shook his head.

I visited Ala Bashir every day after that. We sat in the family room, left more or less alone by his relatives, except when, every so often, they brought us small cups of Turkish coffee and in the early afternoon called us to lunch. Bashir's brother-in-law, a retired teacher, pottered in the garden, which had fig trees, a date palm, a love seat, and a bed of red and pink carnations and roses. His sister, a stout woman with a pleasant, wide face and short, silver hair covered with a black head scarf, was protective and watchful. When Bashir said that we were going to go to his own house to talk, she became very upset. Her husband told Sabah they feared that Bashir might be assassinated because of his close relationship with Saddam Hussein. A few years ago, a man had stabbed him twice. The assailant was incarcerated in Abu Ghraib prison, but he was released in October, during the general amnesty. Bashir had told me this story before, but he had said that the would-be assassin was a former patient who had become mentally unbalanced. "I had done a hair transplant for him," he explained. "And about six

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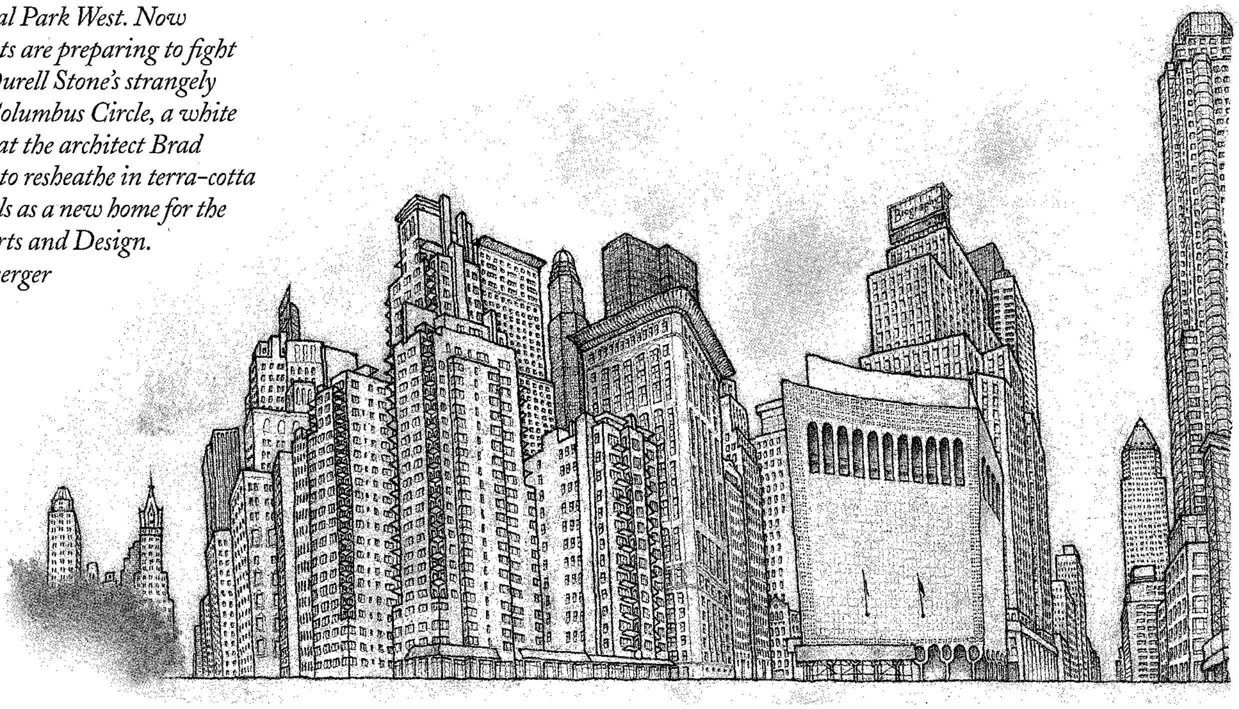
SKETCHBOOK BY MATTEO PERICOLI

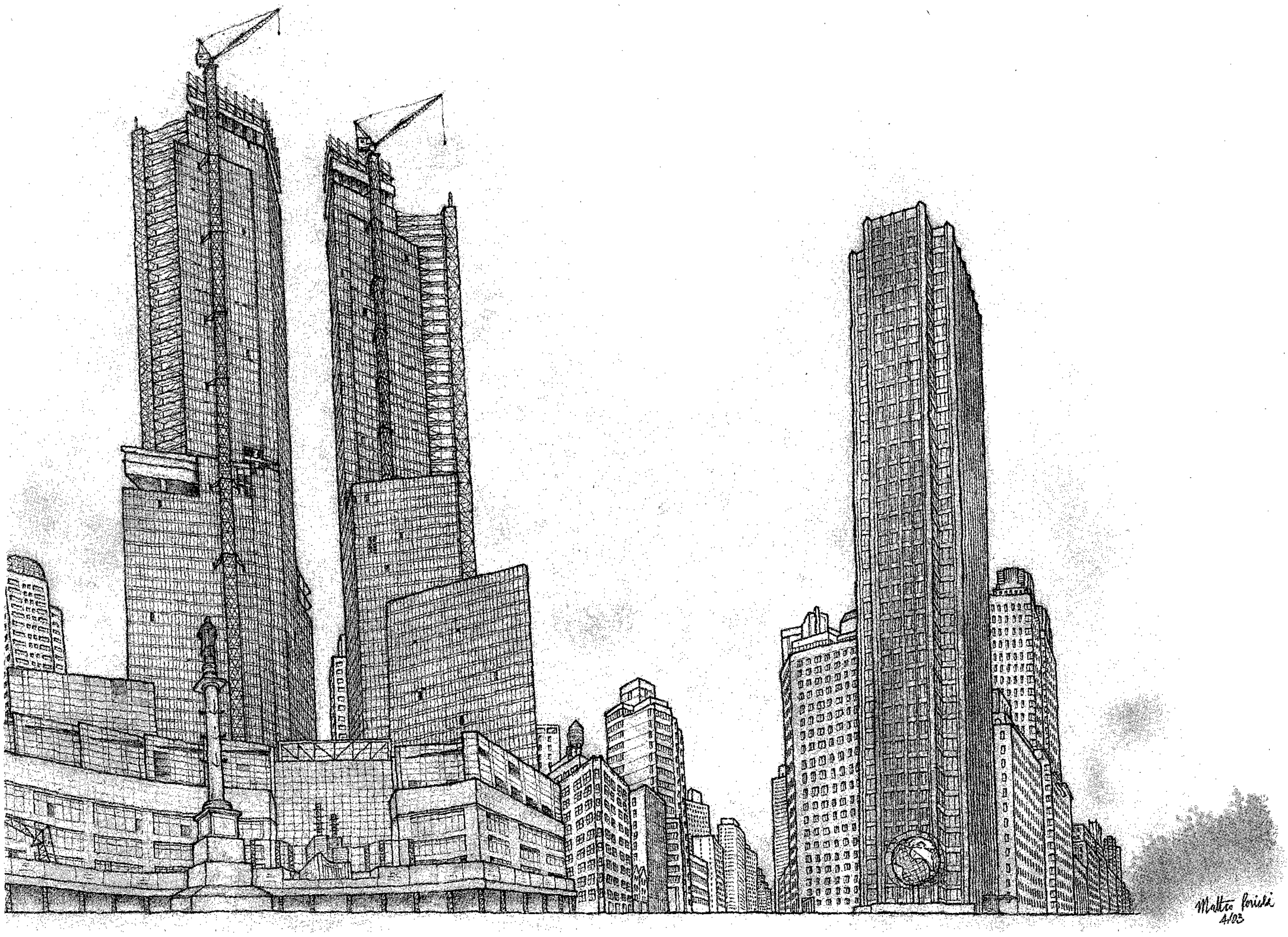
Columbus Circle increasingly feels like an architectural battleground. First came the long struggle over the gargantuan AOL Time Warner towers, which are turning out to be garish glass structures better suited to Houston than to Central Park West. Now preservationists are preparing to fight for Edward Durell Stone's strangely endearing 2 Columbus Circle, a white marble box that the architect Brad Cloepfil plans to resheathe in terra-cotta and glass panels as a new home for the Museum of Arts and Design.
—Paul Goldberger

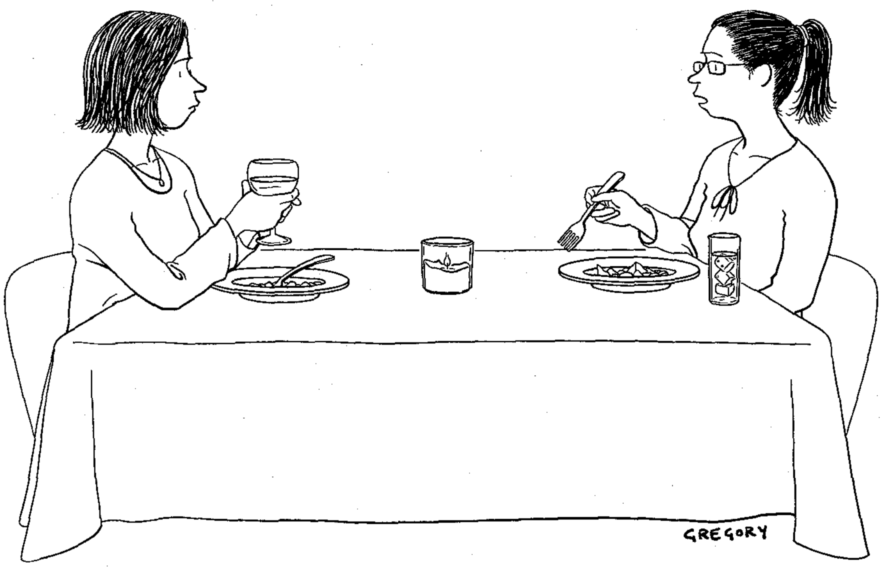


months later he came to the clinic and said he wanted his money back, because he found that I had taken part of his scalp and his liver when he was under anesthesia. At the time, I thought it was a joke, but later, after he attacked me, I realized that it was serious. This sort of thing is quite common, you know, for plastic surgeons, even in the United States." In any case, I told Bashir, it was fine with me to keep on meeting at his sister's.

Bashir had last seen Saddam about two months earlier, around the time that Colin Powell was presenting the American case against Iraq to the U.N. and King Abdullah of Jordan was trying to get the U.S. to offer Saddam safe haven in an Arab country. "He came to the hospital to visit his aunt," he said. "She was seriously ill. He asked me how I was, and how the construction of the new Saddam Center was going." A new hospital building was being put up next door, and Bashir was supposed to move into a big office there, although he told me that he really preferred the small office he has worked in for years. "He looked tired. And he looked older to me. In fact, from the condition of his skin and the wrinkles on his hands, I think he is actually older than his declared age. Officially, he was born in 1937, but I believe he is older. A person's hands can tell you a great deal about his true age." It was said that Bashir had done plastic surgery on Saddam's body doubles and also on Saddam himself, but he had several times told me that this was not true. Saddam came to him for the treatment of minor ailments, things like skin lesions and corns. "The President noticed that I was looking at the nevus, a black spot, on his left cheek," he said. This was the black mark that connoisseurs of the body-double theory were obsessed by. "We were supposed to have removed it a few months earlier, but he'd postponed the operation," Bashir said. Saddam wanted to avoid rumors about his health, but he agreed that the spot should go. "I see you are staring at it," he had said to Bashir. "We'll remove it when this problem"—he meant the threat of war—"is over."

Bashir said that he had come to know Saddam not because of his medical expertise but because Saddam admired his art. "In the late seventies," he said, "when Saddam Hussein was still the Vice-President, I got to know his military adviser, Ghassan Ibrahim. He was a very brave and honest man—he was killed later by Saddam Hussein, of course. There was an exhibit of my paintings, and Saddam Hussein wrote about it in the newspaper. He said that my art was 'unique.' Ghassan offered to take me to see him, but I refused. I don't like this thing of meeting people because they are powerful. Then, in the





"I started my vegetarianism for health reasons, then it became a moral choice, and now it's just to annoy people."

• •

early eighties, during the Iran-Iraq War, I invented some new techniques in plastic surgery. I did the first reimplantations of hands and fingers in the Middle East, and I was included in a group of prominent doctors who were invited to meet the President. He gave a speech and shook hands with everybody. Afterward, one of his guards came to me and told me to go and speak with him, and he said, 'I was really surprised to know you were the same Bashir as the artist.' Soon afterward, I was chosen as one of the doctors on his medical team." All the doctors at the meeting were presented with a new car as a reward for their achievements. Bashir said that was the only time he had accepted a gift from Saddam.

"Saddam Hussein looked down on doctors," Bashir said, "but he thought of me as something else. He said several times, in front of other people, 'I see you as an artist, as a man of culture.' Once, in the late eighties, a lady interviewed me on TV, and the next day the chief of the Presidential guard sent for me. He told me the President had watched the program and had been very impressed. They had shown a painting I had done of a man holding up a grim-looking bird that is trying to bite the man's face. It's a very strong image. I had explained to the interviewer that the painting represents man's struggle with destiny, and that in this battle man always lost. I also said that when men come to have a lot of power and begin to think of themselves as immortal, then it's all over, they lose the battle. To find an example of what I meant, I quoted a famous Iraqi poet, Mutanabbi: 'The most bitter experience for a free man is to make a friendship with someone he doesn't like.' Saddam Hussein had enjoyed the interview, but he was very upset with the lady announcer, who had asked me about my baldness. He sent orders for her not to be allowed on TV for six months.

"On February 1, 1991, during the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein had some kind of accident, and I used to see him every other day. He never said precisely what had happened, but it looked to me like a car accident. He had a sharp, deep cut on the left side of his chin, right down to the bone, and the small finger of his right hand was almost hanging off. His son-in-law Saddam Kamal, the brother of Hussein Kamal—both of whom, as you know, he later had killed—was also wounded, in the lower lip, and a lady, whom I knew to be his second wife, Samira Shahbandar, had a facial fracture and a deep cut in her right eyebrow. So I treated them, too, and I saw Saddam Hussein every other day for a time, and we had long chats. One day, he said, 'I came to know you very well from the TV interview you gave. You said only a few things, but they were all things that are essential to life.'"

Bashir can seem oddly modest and self-congratulatory at the same time. He said that Saddam told him that he didn't understand his art, but that he thought it was "'genuine and honest, and I think it is the best art in the country.' Once he even said 'in the history of Iraq.'" Bashir chuckled ambiguously at this. He said that Saddam never forced him to do things, just asked him politely. In the early nineties, Saddam related a dream to him: "'I was walking in a forest. It was dark. Suddenly I saw a huge snake rushing toward me. My guards and I killed the snake. I cut off its head and a few drops of its blood stained my clothes. I would like you to do a painting about this dream.'"

Bashir's special relationship did not provide him with immunity from all of the constraints imposed on Iraqis. He and his wife were hardly ever permitted to travel abroad at the same time, for instance. And he knew that his phones were tapped. He and Samir Khairi were able to talk freely only if they were in a car together or in a place that they were pretty sure didn't contain hidden microphones. But he was able to travel to countries that were off limits to most other people. And he got away with being openly contemptuous of the men in Saddam's inner circle, including his son Uday.

Bashir talked at length about why he thought Saddam had been drawn to him, but he was less clear about what he thought of Saddam, although he mentioned that he had a soothing manner. "The amazing thing about this man is that he'd have been the No. 1 actor if he'd ever gone to Hollywood," he said. "When you talk to him, he listens to you. I've never known a better listener. He doesn't seem like the same man who does these cruel things. I never saw him angry. He always seemed serene and calm." He suggested that Saddam had multiple personalities. "I don't know if he is schizophrenic," Bashir said, "but he could be. He can be very calm, apparently normal—like when he was interviewed by Dan Rather—but then he changes."

Saddam's eccentricities included an interest in the occult. Bashir said that a few years ago Saddam set up a secret facility for people with special powers. A young boy from Kirkuk, for example, apparently had the ability to see through walls. He and his family were brought to Baghdad to live, but the boy's powers began to diminish and then subsided altogether. A woman with a gift for telepathy turned out to be more useful. When Hussein Kamal defected to Jordan, she was asked to concentrate on making him return to Iraq. He did so, and was killed immediately. Bashir said that the story of the telepathic woman is the only one he knows of that explains why Hussein Kamal would have been so crazy as to come back home.

I asked Bashir if he had used his position to influence Saddam. He said no, then seemed to try to recall an incident that would address the issue more clearly. "Saddam Hussein was really depressed about the uprising of the people against him in 1991," he said. "I went to see him in Radwaniyah, the palace near the airport, and we walked in the garden. It was beautiful, springtime, and it had just stopped raining. The palace has very large gardens. He kept silent for a long time, and then he said he wanted to ask my opinion about something. He talked for more than twenty minutes about the uprising. 'These people who are in the south are not originally Iraqis,' he said. I didn't follow exactly what he was getting at. He went on, 'They have no morals, their women are loose, and if they have no morals it means they can do anything.' I assumed that he was referring to the Shia. The intifada had just started, and he'd not reacted yet. Then he said that the people in the south were not true believers in Islam. He asked me what I thought, and I said, 'Right.' That's all."

I asked Bashir why he had done that.

"Because he expected me to say something," he replied, "and I couldn't say, 'You are wrong!' I remember as he was speaking I was looking at his ear. The sun was coming right through it, and it looked like wax. Because of this, I wasn't really listening to him, or concentrating on what he was saying. But he was talking about being an Arab, about Islam, and he seemed to be trying to come up with a reason for their uprising against him."

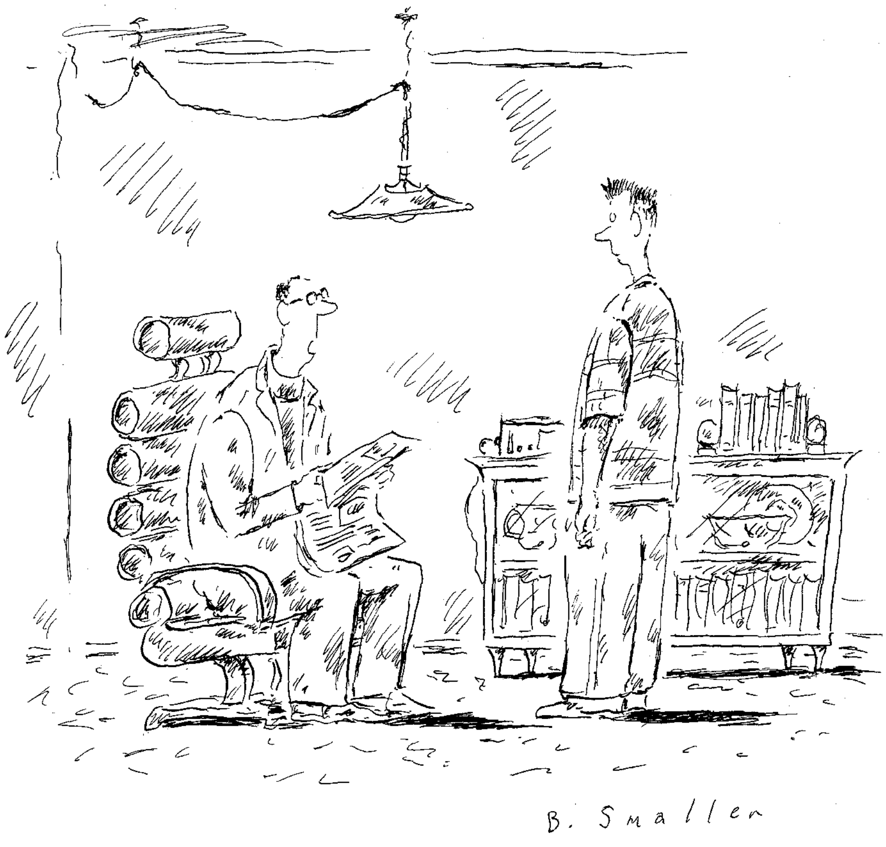
"Why not say to him, 'You are wrong?' "

"I didn't think he was in the mood for someone to oppose him. And, you know, long before him, for hundreds of years, people in Iraq have not been able to give their opinions frankly. I told him that Iraqi civilization is rooted deeply in the past; this country's civilization goes back five and six thousand years. I think that when the Arabs of Iraq adopted Islam, fourteen hundred years ago, they took some of it, but they retained much of their own culture. He didn't reply to that, but he asked me why I had named my eldest son Sumer. I told him that it was because I thought Iraqis should be proud of their civilization.

"The next morning, and for two consecutive days, articles appeared in the Baathist newspaper *Thawra*. They were unsigned, but they were written by him, and everything in the articles was exactly what he had told me in the garden."

Ala Bashir's account of his walk in the palace garden with Saddam Hussein and his fixation on the illuminated ear rather than on what Saddam was saying seemed true to me. He was a man who lived in his own head. He was sensitive and distracted much of the time, more an artist than a man of science. But I wondered if his distraction at that moment, when Saddam seemed to be rationalizing what would soon be the brutal suppression of the Shia intifada, wasn't also an act of will. By focussing on the Great Leader's ear, he didn't have to acknowledge the reality of the tyrant whose corns he checked and whose questions about art he humored. But he hadn't forgotten the moment, and the fact that he recalled it to me a decade later seemed to indicate that perhaps the issue of moral compromise was not so abstract to him after all.

We continued to meet at Bashir's sister's house, and one day went to have lunch at the home of Samir Khairi, who lives five or six miles away, in the Al Mansour neighborhood. Khairi has a satellite dish, an exclusive perk of senior Baath Party members and other nomenklatura under Saddam, and we wanted to watch CNN and Al Jazeera. We drove there in my car, which had the letters "TV" in yellow masking tape on the windows. During the war, that was supposed to protect jour-



"You can make your own mistakes when you can hire your own lawyer."

nalists. Bashir asked if we could stop off at the house of his secretary, to tell her what had happened to him, and when we were there we let her use my satellite phone to call her relatives in Detroit, where there is a sizable Iraqi émigré community. She and her sister and mother wept as they took turns talking. Everyone laughed when the mother, a large, rough-voiced older woman, got on the phone. She bellowed into it, and whatever she said made them giggle. Bashir laughed, too, and told me that she was telling her concerned relatives, "Don't worry, we are safe, and anyway we have machine guns to defend ourselves!"

Over the next few days, Bashir made a few short trips out alone. One of his former drivers had reappeared, and I noticed that he was using a small white, nondescript pickup truck rather than the Toyota Land Cruiser, which would have identified him as someone of privilege from the Saddam era. As it was, whenever we were stuck in traffic quite a few people in adjacent cars recognized Bashir and stared at him.

After about a week, we went to Bashir's house and to his office. We drove past "The Union," his monument in the traffic island at the western edge of the city. It was gouged with bullet holes, and someone had added graffiti in Arabic around its base. Bashir said that they were political slogans. One said "Long Live Talabani"—the head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—and the other "Long Live Sistani," the Shiite Grand Ayatollah of Najaf. We saw some Shia pilgrims walking from Baghdad to Karbala, fifty miles to the south, as part of the annual religious festival of Arbaeen, marking the end of forty days of mourning for the death of the martyr Imam Hussein. This was unsettling for Bashir, who is from a Shia family but is passionately anticlerical. He told me many times that he felt it was very important that, in the wake of Saddam, Iraq remain a secular state, and he fretted about the Shia resurgence, which he saw as a power play on the part of Iran. He said that he would not object if the Americans decided to invade Iran next. "It is not just me," he said. "I think many, many people in Iraq would support this, because everyone knows that Iran is the biggest troublemaker in the whole region. This is a fact."

"Go to work, I'll find out why Mom is agitated."

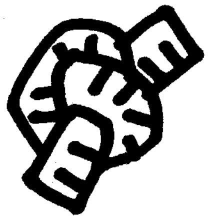
The cars were missing from the carport at Bashir's house. He had moved them to a safe place, he said, before the looting began. I saw that he had taken down most of the pictures from the walls in his living room, including the one of him and Saddam. The floor was covered with broken glass. "From the bombing," he explained. He had taped plastic sheeting over the windows, but it was falling off, and he spent several minutes putting it back up. He was going to have to find someone to put in new windowpanes, he said. We went into the kitchen, where the doors of the refrigerators were wide open. He had taken everything out and given it to his neighbors. There had been no electricity for the past two weeks.

Bashir's studio is at the back of the house, in a two-story annex, across a little open space. He paints in the lower floor, and the bookcase there is stuffed with art books and medical tomes. Buckets filled with paintbrushes and paints were strewn around. A large canvas on an easel faced a desk. It was of a reclining nude woman with voluptuous buttocks who was reaching up and holding a bird. A man without a face stood above her. A square divided by prison bars covered his stomach. The woman in the painting reminded me of the one in Rousseau's "Dream." A framed clipping from a news magazine hung on the wall. It showed Bashir standing, smiling, next to a patient's bed. The story accompanying it described his breakthrough reimplantation of the hand of the man in the picture, a Hungarian technician who had been in an industrial accident. There were paintings and some small terra-cotta sculptures in another room. Most of them were renderings of human heads, many of them distorted, and also of ravens, which appear frequently in his work. One raven had an open beak, and three more beaks came out of its maw. "This to me expresses the need to scream, to call out," Bashir said. "Sometimes you feel that, no matter how much you call out, it is not enough."

As we left the neighborhood, Bashir explained that it had been an allotment bought by the Medical Union of Iraq in the seventies. In those days, it was in the desert, beyond the outer edges of Baghdad. Doctors who wished to live there were able to buy lots cheaply and build houses with government-subsidized mortgages. Many of them had since sold their property, and other types of people had moved in, but there were still several doctors there, and it was still solidly middle class. We drove out to the main highway, which was lined with trophy mansionettes in the New Babylonian style favored by rich Iraqis—gaudy places with flamboyant façades, decorated with domes and outsized pillars and gigantic front doors. It was a new development, and there were many other mansions, some only half built, in the open land behind the houses next to the highway. "All those houses," Bashir said, "belong to Saddam Hussein's guards." They were three or four times as large as the doctors' homes just across the road.

The staff at the hospital greeted Bashir with surprise and reverence. The lobby was full of wounded men and boys. We were told that a young boy had been injured in one of the last American bombing raids and one of his arms had just been amputated, but many of the others were looters who had been hurt somehow while they were stealing or in gunfights with one another. This upset Bashir, and he said he didn't want to stay long. "A hospital for reconstructive surgery, full of thieves," he said bitterly. We went into his office. The portrait of Saddam had been removed, and a yellow rectangle marked the place where it had hung on the pale-green walls. The bust of Saddam was also gone from his desk.

I went into a room I had visited before the war, where a model of what would have been Bashir's next great public monument was kept. He had explained to me that, five years ago, Saddam asked him to create a monument for him that would sum up all his achievements as Iraq's President, including everything he'd built, and also his military victories. Whenever he saw Saddam, the President had asked, with increasing impatience: How is it going, when can I see the model? Bashir had begged off, but finally, about six months ago, Saddam had said, "Why haven't you done this? It has been too long," and so he concentrated on it and took the design to Saddam, who was pleased. "He really liked it," Bashir said, "and you know, it is a good monument, I think." He said that the name he'd originally given to it was the "Epic of Iraq," after the Epic of Gilgamesh, but that the President had changed it to the "Epic of Saddam." There had been some talk about putting Saddam's statue or a portrait in front of it, and he'd got around this by inscribing some words of wisdom from Saddam on the statue itself, and including a sculpted facsimile of one of Saddam's arms and fists in the monument.



The large model, which is made of plaster of Paris and painted a bronze color, was sitting on a slab of thick plywood in the middle of the room. The main body is a sloping, monstrous boatlike structure, with friezes along the sides. Wax figures of soldiers, painted gold, fight and march along the top; below this, down the sides, is a large surface etched with scenes of ordinary Iraqi life, rather like old Sumerian tableaux. At the bottom, as if crushed underneath the whole thing, are vanquished soldiers, people in pain and defeat. The front of the boatlike body extends into a great twisting dragon's neck, with gaping jaws, and with a huge lance stabbed into one of its eyes. The lance rises up like a standard, with the words "Allahu Akbar"—"God Is Great"—sculpted in Arabic lettering at the top. The lance is gripped by an enormous fist and part of a man's forearm that extends out over the front of the monument from the soldiers on the top of the boat, essentially killing the dragon, which it is, in the end, an integral part of. If it had been built, it would have been Iraq's tallest monument, a hundred and thirty feet high and a hundred feet long. It was to have stood in the Presidential gardens opposite the Al Rashid Hotel.

A few days later, Bashir told me that he had been watching the Al Arabiya channel on his nephew's satellite TV and had seen footage of the interior of the Saddam Arts Center, Baghdad's national gallery, which had been trashed and vandalized. Nearly two dozen of his paintings had been in the gallery's permanent collection. He became very depressed, he said, when he saw that they had been slashed to ribbons: "I have trained myself not to be sad, because everything in life is temporary. But the destruction I saw confirmed to me how ignorant human beings are. Basically, we are not very far from the Stone Age." He said that Barzan Al Tikriti had owned twelve of his paintings, and that they must be gone, too, because Barzan's house in Baghdad had been looted and burned.

Bashir's friend Samir Khairi Tawfik is a jolly man who loves to cook and have friends come to his house for meals and drinks. Khairi resembles the Ruritanian nobles and government ministers depicted in Hergé's Tintin books; all he lacks is a monocle. He is tall and corpulent, but not fat, and has a thick, old-fashioned mustache. He, like Bashir, is bald, with a fringe of hair, but his hair is shorter and darker. He is separated from his second wife and lives alone in his house in Al Mansour, a large crenellated brown thing that looks a bit like a fortress from the street.

One of Khairi's daughters, a young, red-haired woman who speaks French, often comes to help him cook and clean, but in spite of her efforts Khairi lives in a state of domestic disorder, with piles of documents, newspapers, and un-ironed clothes everywhere. A few friends, who seem to live in their pajamas, are usually staying over. The TV is always on—Khairi is a news junkie—at an unbearably loud volume. Bashir grabs the remote and turns it down when he arrives; Khairi good-naturedly lets him do this, and then, a few minutes later, he turns it back up.

After the fall of Baghdad, the number of friends who hung around Khairi's house increased. They gossiped about the Americans and the latest capture of an official from Saddam's regime and ruminated about their future. Most of them were mid-level nomenklatura of the ancien régime, Baath Party members, military officers, and Foreign Ministry officials who were suddenly jobless. Khairi's brother, an Air Force captain who had fled Tikrit before the marines arrived, was awaiting a summons to report back to work.

Khairi hopes that the Baath Party will survive. "I joined the Party in 1973, and I still believe in its principles," he told me, "the principles of Arab unity, socialist economy, and liberty. Saddam Hussein pretended to respect those principles before he took power in 1979, but then he executed the real leaders. He said that the Baath Party was the ultimate authority in Iraq, but this was not true. Only one family had power, and it used the Party to give it political legitimacy. The Party became an intelligence apparatus. But the principles of the Baath Party are very good for our society—freedom and liberty and respect for all religions. That's why so many educated people, like me, became Baathists in university."

Muhammad Jaffar, a former diplomat who publishes trade and economic journals and is a neighbor of Khairi's, delighted in pointing out to me everything the Americans appeared to be doing wrong. They obviously knew nothing about Iraqi society. "They are sitting on a time bomb," he said, citing the restiveness of the Shia clerics and how the Americans didn't seem to be moving quickly enough to clip their wings or to name a credible leader to govern Iraq. In the next breath, he told me that people who were savvy would have good opportunities. He hoped to expand his publications, even launch a magazine on Middle Eastern economies soon, if everything went well. I pointed out that he seemed to be contradicting himself. He smiled and said something about "the duality" of the Iraqi character: "This is another thing the Americans don't understand."

Khairi and Bashir and their friends were derisive the day the former Iraqi Finance Minister was captured and a CNN newscaster quoted Administration officials who said that he could help them trace billions of dollars Saddam had allegedly stashed away in foreign accounts. "This man is a nobody, a nothing," Bashir said. "Do they really think Saddam Hussein and his family used him to hide their money?" All that sort of business, both he and Khairi said, was handled directly by family members or their representatives.

When it was announced that Barzan Al Tikriti had been captured, however, Khairi, who had worked for Barzan for years, was ecstatic. "Good! Good!" he shouted in front of the TV. A few days later, he explained to me why Barzan's arrest pleased him so much. Khairi studied law in Baghdad, and received a doctorate in constitutional law and the philosophy of law in 1981. By then, he was working as the editor of the *Al Iraq* newspaper in Baghdad. Just before he got his Ph.D., Barzan, who was then the head of Saddam's intelligence apparatus, the Mukhabarat, had called him and asked him what he planned to do with himself. Khairi told him that he wanted to teach in the law faculty at Baghdad University. "He asked me to be the editor of a new Arabic-language magazine in Paris, called *Kul Al Arab*, which would be distributed internationally. The money came from Iraqi intelligence, but it was to be a journal for all Arabs. So I accepted and was the director of the magazine from 1983 until 1991. It was a great success." But Khairi was arrested by the French police in 1991, when the Gulf War began, and deported.

In Baghdad, Khairi says, he was made the director of the Center of the Department of Research in the Presidential Institute—a branch of the Mukhabarat—where he worked making summaries of foreign books and publications for Saddam Hussein, and provided analyses of international affairs. He did this until 1993, when Barzan Al Tikriti was made Iraq's ambassador to the U.N. mission in Geneva and also Saddam's political adviser. Khairi worked as a kind of liaison, he says, between the President and Barzan from an office in the Foreign Ministry until 1998. "Then Barzan came back to Iraq and the problems between us began," he said. "He wanted me to get involved with him in a bid to become a political force against Uday, whom he hated. Uday had married his daughter, and after only three months he had left her. I didn't want to be part of his problem, and he had me put in prison in 1999. I was there for two months and four days. The President's men were afraid to tell him about me. Finally, the Mukhabarat told Barzan that I had to be released. I was held in the Mukhabarat prison in Mansour, and, to be honest with you, it wasn't so bad. I was given a good room, with satellite TV, and they let me go home every two or three days. This kind of thing was one of the oddities of our dictatorship."

Six months after Khairi was released, Barzan invited him to attend a bereavement ceremony for his wife, who had died of cancer two years earlier in Switzerland, where he kept her body refrigerated while he prepared a shrine for her in Owja, the village of the Presidential clique near Tikrit. "He insisted that I come," Khairi explained. "I did not want to go, but my father said it was obvious that Barzan wanted to apologize to me. And that was exactly what happened. He apologized."

Khairi had made his formal peace with Barzan, and he returned to his job in the Presidential research office, with which Barzan had no connection. Saddam, Khairi said, had come to esteem his work. "The President always read everything I wrote, and three times he sent me a half-million dinars as a present." He stayed at this post until last December, when he was told that he was going to be made an ambassador. "For the first time, I was free of the Presidential research office and intelligence work." More important, as he describes it, he was out of the Barzan and Hussein family intrigues.

Khairi boasted a little about some of the work he had done for Saddam Hussein. His analyses, he said, had dealt with Iraq's relations with the United States. He had urged the President not to shoot at the American and British warplanes that policed the no-fly zones over Iraq. "But unfortunately he didn't listen to this." Khairi shook his head in regret. "I can't show them to you now," he said, "because I am still faithful to the state, but I want to tell you that I also wrote three assessments for the President in the last year—twelve months, then six, and the last only three months ago—saying that the Americans would attack Iraq and that we had no chance to resist them. General Abed"—Saddam's personal secretary—"refused to give these to the President, however. Like everyone else, he was afraid to tell him the truth."

Khairi had said to me that he would be happy to pass on information about Barzan to the Americans, and I asked him why. "It's not because of anything he did to me," he said. "Believe me. It's because when he was head of the Mukhabarat he killed so many innocent people. You must tell this to those responsible in the United States. . . . He should be taken to Guantánamo; he's a criminal. He killed many many people—how many, exactly, I don't know, but hundreds."

"Personally?"

"He was present at the ceremonies of killing, yes."

"So how could you work for him, and for Saddam, knowing what you knew about them and what they did?"

"Really, I had no choice." Khairi's voice took on a beseeching tone. "Because, once they knew me, I was afraid for my family, my mother, father, brothers, sisters, even my cousins. If I were to leave the county, they'd hurt them. And if I stayed here and didn't work for them they could kill me at any time."

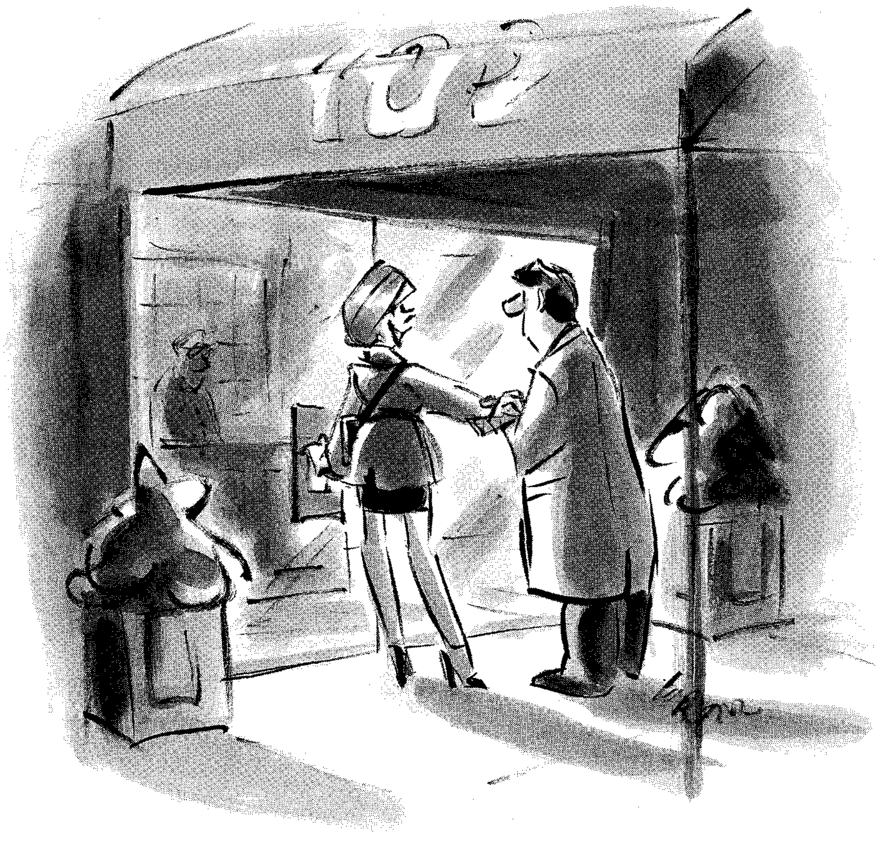
One day, Ala Bashir took a book, "Lenin's Embalmers," from his library and asked me to read it. It was an account of the mummification of Lenin, by a man, Ilya Zbarsky, who had helped his father do the embalming and run the mausoleum laboratory dedicated to preserving Lenin's body in perpetuity. Bashir had been struck by the similarity between Stalin's Russia and the Iraq he was living in. "It is exactly the same, exactly!" he exclaimed. "I was amazed." There was a photograph of the embalmed body of Lenin on the cover, and photographs inside the book showed the construction of his mausoleum in Red Square. In the nineteen-twenties, an architectural competition had been held for a new mausoleum, and a few of the entries were reproduced in the book. It seemed to me that there were uncanny, rather creepy parallels between the fanciful drawings for the Soviet über-morgue and the necromantic bestiality of the "Epic of Saddam" monument that Bashir had designed. I asked him if he thought of himself as, in a sense, Saddam's embalmer. Bashir looked at me quickly, and then looked away. He laughed, but didn't say anything. Then he told me that he had read the book after he went to Moscow to visit the embalming institute. He had gone at the request of Barzan Al Tikriti. "The mausoleum he was building for his wife was still incomplete," Bashir said, "and he'd already spent more than five million pounds on it. It is an incredible thing. So he asked me to explore the idea of having her embalmed by the institute in Moscow. The idea was that he would put her on display in the mausoleum, but just for family and friends."

It had not been easy to obtain permission for the visit to the institute, he said, which was one of the most secure buildings he had ever entered. There were locks on every door, which needed to be opened with special keys. The only other people there were a few attendants. He described being led down an empty hall to a chamber that was lined with human heads. In the inner sanctum, they showed him a body that was being embalmed. The heirs of Lenin's embalmers explained that they were surviving by performing similar services for Russian mafiosi. The high point of the visit was when the embalmers pressed a button and a section of the floor opened up, and a platform rose from the depths. Lenin was lying on it in his glass coffin. He is periodically removed from the mausoleum in Red Square, and is refreshed by the group of scientists who are preserving him for posterity. Bashir said that he found the whole thing fascinating but spooky.

I asked what had happened when he reported back to Barzan Al Tikriti.

"It seemed too expensive," Bashir said. As he recalled, it would have cost about five million dollars.

At the end of "Lenin's Embalmers," Zbarsky speculates that he and his father escaped death during one of the most dangerous periods in modern history because they were, ironically, so close to the source of the awful power that destroyed millions of other people. They were useful. Bashir said that he found it a quirk of destiny that he had been chosen to have an unusual relationship with Saddam Hussein for two decades. He had written things down, and he hoped to be able to tell the story of what had happened in his country so that it could not happen anywhere else: "It is strange how a system can become so bad that no one, not a single person, can change it." ♦



"Not tonight, Howard, but you have advanced to the next round."

ANNALS OF MEDICINE

DESPERATE MEASURES

Francis Moore remade modern surgery. But he couldn't live with the consequences.

BY ATUL GAWANDE

On November 28, 1942, an errant match set alight the paper fronds of a fake electric-lit palm tree in a corner of the Cocoanut Grove night club near Boston's theatre district and started one of the worst fires in American history. The flames caught onto the fabric decorating the ceiling, and then swept everywhere, engulfing the place within minutes. The club was jammed with almost a thousand revellers that night. Its few exit doors were either locked or blocked, and hundreds of people were trapped inside. Rescue workers had to break through walls to get to them. Those with any signs of life were sent primarily to two hospitals—Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston City Hospital. At Boston City Hospital, doctors and nurses gave the patients the standard treatment for their burns. At M.G.H., however, an iconoclastic surgeon named Oliver Cope decided to try an experiment on the victims. Francis Daniels Moore, then a fourth-year surgical resident, was one of only two doctors working on the emergency ward when the victims came in. The experience, and the experiment, changed him. And, because they did, modern medicine would never be the same.

It had been a slow night, and Moore, who was twenty-nine years old, was up in his call room listening to a football game on the radio. At around 10:30 P.M., he heard the familiar whine of an ambulance arriving outside, put on his white coat, and went to see what was going on. Making his way to the ward, he heard another ambulance arriving—then another, and another. He broke into a run. In less than two hours, he received a hundred and fourteen burn victims. He described the scene several days later in a letter to his parents:

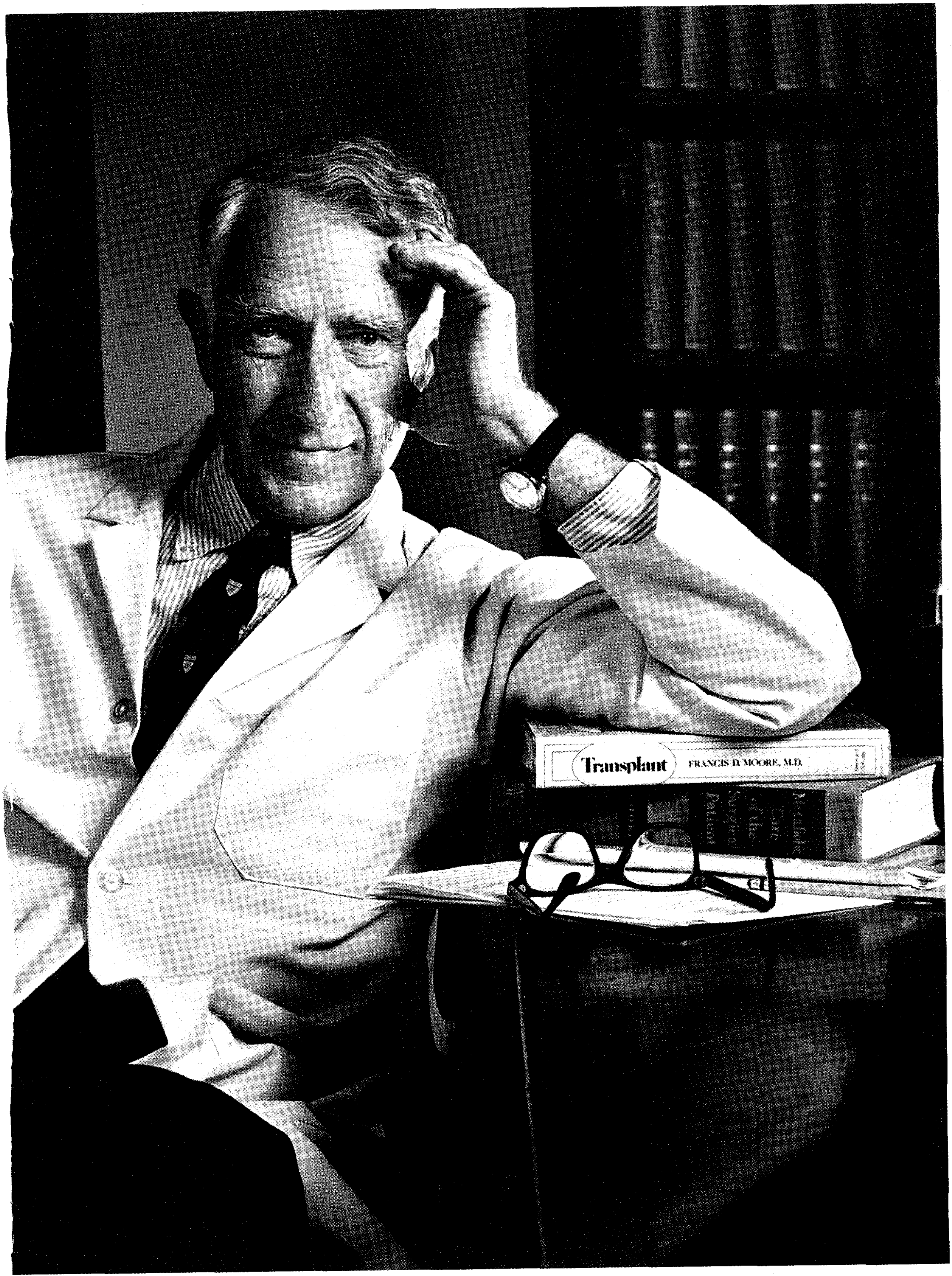
> Down the hall were streaming stretchers with burned people on them. One a young girl, with her clothing burned off, and her skin hanging like ribbons as she flailed her arms around, screaming with pain. Another a naval lieutenant who kept repeating over and over again, "I must find her. I must find her." His face and hands were the dead paper-white that only a deep third-degree burn can be, and I knew only looking at him for a moment that if he lived, in two weeks his face would be a red, unrecognizable slough. He didn't live.

Moore grabbed a syringe full of morphine and gave anyone he found alive a slug for the pain. Dozens died in those first few hours. Many succumbed from shock and overwhelming injuries. Others, some without a single burn on them, died of asphyxia, their singed throats slowly swelling closed. In all, nearly five hundred people died from the fire. Of M.G.H.'s hundred and fourteen patients, only thirty-nine survived long enough to be admitted to the hospital and treated for their burns. Bodies were laid in rows along a corridor; a hospital floor was cleared for the survivors. And, at Oliver Cope's insistence, the experiment began.

The conventional treatment for severe burns was to tan the burn surface as quickly as possible, and at Boston City that is what the surgeons did. People who initially survive bad burns remain at high risk of dying from infection in the days to follow. Your skin protects you from the germs of the outside world; a burn opens the portals. Applying tannic acid to a burn was a way to create a thickened, protective cover. Patients were given morphine and soaked in a bathtub; then their blisters were cut off and the acid slowly poured on their wounds. The process was extraordinarily painful and laborious, and sometimes fatal. It also took four or five trained personnel to care for one patient. Still, it was a proved therapy, and it had been standard practice for years.

Medicine, especially surgery, is a conservative profession; a physician departs only reluctantly from the established techniques and lessons. And for good reason: the stakes, if you are wrong, are too high. Doctors are expected to adopt new treatments only with strong evi-

For much of his career, Moore believed that i


Transplant
FRANCIS D. MOORE, M.D.

CAMERA PRESS/RETNA

atient was dying, doctors should consider anything, however outrageous, that might make a difference. Photograph by Yousuf Karsh.

dence that they will have better results. But Cope was a believer; and one of the things he believed was that tannic-acid treatment was no good.

Earlier that year, he'd been called on for advice following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Investigators had found that the major casualties were not from blast injuries but from burns from the fires that followed. Medical personnel had been overwhelmed by the labor required by tannic-acid treatment. A day and a half after the attack, they still had not completed the initial care for victims. Many patients died waiting. Cope proposed wrapping people's burns in gauze coated with petroleum jelly, and then leaving them alone. The treatment would be far less painful, and a single doctor could care for four or five patients by himself.

To many, the notion that a thin layer of gauze smeared with Vaseline would stop infection seemed foolish. Yet on the night of the Cocoanut Grove fire—despite numerous lives at stake, intense media attention, criticism from the surgical establishment, and the fact that M.G.H.'s results could be compared very easily with Boston City's—Cope insisted on his experimental treatment. His experience with it was almost laughably slim: he had tried it just twice (once on himself). But he had found in the laboratory that blisters protected by petroleum-jelly gauze appeared to stay sterile.

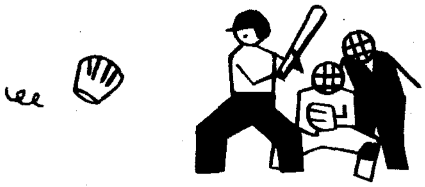
Francis Moore was intelligent and ambitious; he was also, before the fire, still relatively unformed. He had received his undergraduate and medical degrees at Harvard, but distinguished himself more as a wit than as a scholar. Chronic asthma from childhood had kept him out of the war. He was no better skilled in the operating room than his fellow-residents. But the Cocoanut Grove disaster became his Omaha Beach; it exposed him to a magnitude of suffering he scarcely imagined possible, leaving him with a thickened, protective hide of his own. And it gave him his first true expertise—he saw more serious burns from this one catastrophe than most surgeons do in their careers, and he came to publish dozens of papers in the field. Despite the range of his eventual influence, he called himself a burn surgeon the rest of his life.

Moore—or Franny, as everyone called him—went on to become one of the most important surgeons of the twentieth century. He discovered the chemical composition of the human body, and was a pioneer in the development of nuclear medicine. As the youngest chairman of surgery in Harvard's history, he led his department to attempt some of the most daring medical experiments ever conducted—experiments that established, among other things, organ transplantation, heart-valve surgery, and the use of hormonal therapy against breast cancer. Along the way, the line between patients and experimental subjects was blurred; his attempts to develop new procedures inevitably cost lives as well as saved them. His advances made medicine more radical, more invasive of human bodies, and more dependent upon technology. But in November of 1942 he got his first sense of what might be possible when you put aside custom and convention.

In the hours and days after the fire, Moore carried out Cope's experimental treatment. A month later, investigators from the National Research Council arrived in Boston. At Boston City Hospital, the council's final report said, some thirty per cent of the initial survivors had died, most from infections and other complications of their burns. At M.G.H., none of the initial survivors had died from their burn wounds. Cautious experience lost. And, as Moore would always remember, experiment won.

Moore's experiments pushed medicine harder and farther than almost anyone had contemplated—and uncomfortably beyond what contemporary medical ethics would permit. Moore did not think like a surgeon; he wasn't enthralled by technique. Doing burn research with Cope, he found his strongest interest was science.

A few months after the fire, Moore took a year off from operating to do research, enrolling in nuclear-physics courses and joining a biophysics lab. In that one year in the lab, he and a young chemist, Lester Tobin, invented a method of using radioactive tracers and a Geiger counter to detect abscesses that were invisible to X-rays. The technique obviated exploratory surgery for a range of diseases, anticipating the field known as nuclear medicine. Another time, on rounds one day when he was a resident, he came up with an operation to cure ulcers. He had been seeing a patient with stress-related ulcers and proposed that severing certain nerves to the stomach could cure the problem. A year later, as a new member of the M.G.H. surgical faculty, he performed the operation and proved it—only to find that a doctor from the University of Chicago had beaten him by just a few months. The operation became the standard treatment for peptic ulcers for the next twenty-five years.



Moore's range and creativity were astounding. "The mind could simply overpower," said Steve Rosenberg, who trained under him and is now chief of surgery at the National Cancer Institute. Moore had a gravelly, throaty voice and a booming laugh, and he was by nature an actor. As an undergraduate, he had been president of both the *Harvard Lampoon* and the Hasty Pudding Theatricals. He had written plays, composed musicals, and, with his friend Alistair Cooke, once put together a show entitled "Hades! The Ladies!," which they took on the road, performing it in the Roosevelt White House. He never lost the ability to command an audience, small or large. "He had that attractive *pause*," Leroy Vandam, an anesthesiologist who worked alongside him for decades, said.

In 1945, in an experiment that made Moore's career, he tackled a seemingly inconsequential but long-unanswered question: How much water is in the human body? Even into the nineteen-forties, nobody had a precise idea. Scientists knew that people were made of salts and minerals and water and fats and so on in some kind of balance and distribution, but they did not know much more than that or how they might find out. Moore hit upon an idea while sitting, Archimedes-like, in his bathtub: Suppose he put a drop of heavy water in the tub water, let it diffuse, and then took a drop of the tub water out. If he measured how much the deuterium had been diluted, he'd be able to calculate exactly how much water was in the tub. And he

"Let me remind you that you have the right to remain silent."

could do the same thing in a human being.

A professor he'd met while doing isotope research sent Moore a test tube of radioactive deuterium from a nuclear reactor. (These were looser times.) Working in the small laboratory he'd been given as a junior faculty member, he injected a few millilitres of the heavy water into some rabbits, let it equilibrate over an hour, then withdrew samples of blood by vein. He measured the concentration of deuterium using a densitometer and calculated each rabbit's total body-water volume. Then he measured the amount of water in the rabbits directly, by drying them in a vacuum-desiccator. His calculations, it turned out, were perfect.

Moore began doing heavy-water studies in human beings. He tested almost anyone he could get his hands on: laboratory workers, their families, and many others. He tried other radioactive isotopes, too—of sodium, potassium, iron, phosphorus, chromium—and gradually figured out the amounts and behaviors of the essential ingredients of the human body. Then he and a growing team of researchers began taking measurements of patients with traumatic wounds, chronic illnesses, massive hemorrhages. The work paid off: study by study, the doctors opened the black box of human chemistry.

Here are some of the things Moore discovered. That the average adult male is fifty-five per cent water and the adult female is fifty per cent. That this difference appears during puberty, when boys lose fat and girls gain it: muscle sequesters water and fat displaces it, so that a very skinny person can be as much as seventy per cent H_2O. That in acute illness water leaks out of blood vessels into the soft tissues, sometimes by the litre; the heart tries to adjust by increasing its rate; and the whole process is controlled by hormones in the bloodstream. That muscle protein is burned for energy, and this is why sick people waste away.

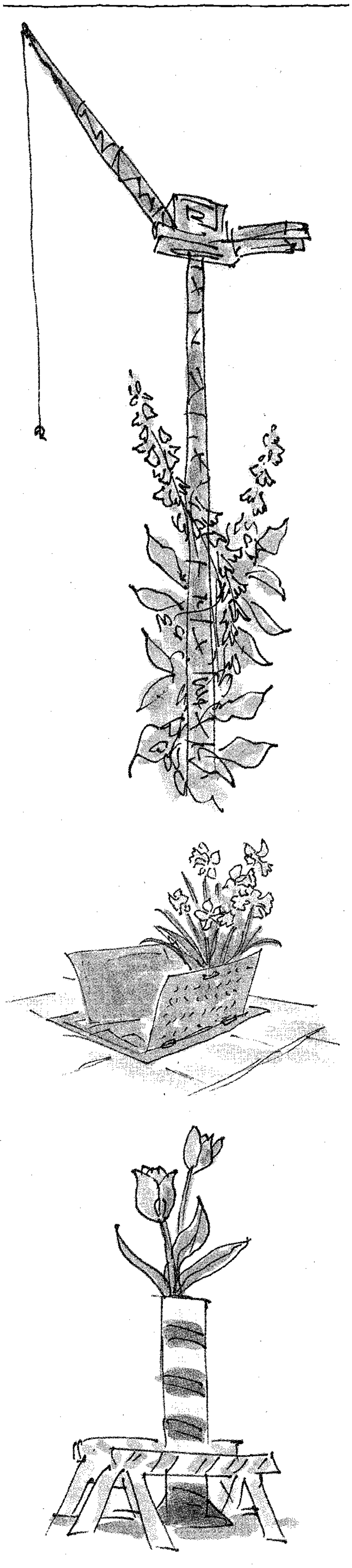
He also learned that critical illness often arose from a simple chemical imbalance—that, for instance, what often killed patients with vomiting or severe infection was a lack of potassium, and that, with carefully calibrated infusions of salt water and potassium, these deaths could be prevented. He showed that in some patients one could correct delirium, convulsions, or heart-rhythm disturbances with small amounts of magnesium, and that sick patients require particular proteins and minerals and sugars in order to survive. Through more than a decade of studies, he worked out, for disease after disease, a step-by-step process for getting people well.

The revolutionary nature of Moore's work was recognized almost immediately. In July, 1948, at the age of thirty-four, he was made full professor and chairman of surgery at Harvard Medical School's Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. In 1959, he compiled his findings in what became one of the top-selling medical textbooks ever.

In dozens of ways, Moore's research simply made medicine better—more informed, more systematic, more effective. He had made a science of convalescence. Surgery, in particular, changed dramatically. Even the most elementary operations had carried substantial risk of death—the average person stood a one-in-twenty chance of dying from an appendectomy, an operation that some seven per cent of human beings require. But Moore showed surgeons how to make a range of small adjustments—from how to titrate fluids and salts to how to compensate for bleeding or shock—that made routine surgery safer by orders of magnitude. His findings probably saved tens of thousands of lives a year—an impact on the scale of vaccines and antibiotics.

At the same time, Moore's work, by lowering the risk of invading the human body, gave doctors the confidence to try things that would once have seemed outlandish. And, in this, no one was more ambitious than Francis D. Moore.

I knew Dr. Moore as a formidable though distant presence in my surgical training. The hospital where he was chairman of surgery is my hospital—it is now called Brigham and Women's Hospital—and though he was long retired when my residency began, a few years



ago, he still attended weekly surgical conferences. You always shook a little when you took the podium to explain a patient's case and looked out to find him sitting in the front row. White-haired to his eyebrows, slouching a bit in his seat, his hands folded casually, he hardly appeared threatening. Yet when the time came for his comments he seemed to know everything about the science and the surgery and the saving of human lives, and he didn't hesitate to make his views known.

In an operating room, he could be chatty and make little jokes. But even when he was in his thirties, with staff sometimes decades older than he, the room was firmly in his command. He liked to whistle during cases, for example. (Some surmised that he did so to control his wheezy, asthmatic breathing—he had a poorly concealed cigarette habit that had turned his childhood lung troubles into emphysema, but he could whistle an entire Brandenburg concerto during an operation without dropping a note.) And, when he did, no one made a sound.

Although he was not an especially fast or elegant surgeon, he was meticulous, methodical, and, when he needed to be, inventive. He didn't like surprises in operations, but he came prepared for them. Some surgeons arrive in the operating room with only a vague idea of what they will do. Faced with a non-routine problem—an unusually massive hernia, say, or a colon cancer invading the spleen—they improvise, relying on instinct and experience. Moore thought hard about each case ahead of time. Once he took a patient to the operating room, he had decided on every move he wanted to make.

Like many attending surgeons, he used to browbeat the residents who operated with him. But his concern was not their technique. "He really wanted to know how you thought," Gordon Vineyard, a Boston surgeon who had trained under him, told me. "He wanted to know what you were going to do. How. Why. Especially why. He got in your head." People had put their lives in your hands, so you'd better know everything you could about them. "He'd ask you about a lab test for a patient, and, if you didn't know the result, that was a moral failure," Vineyard said. "But if you ever guessed, or made it up, you were *dead*."

"The fundamental act of medical care is assumption of responsibility . . . complete responsibility for the welfare of the patient," Moore wrote on the first page of his textbook. A good doctor, he went on, "employs any effective means available." And if there is no effective means available? Then you must try to come up with one. Death, he argued, must never be seen as acceptable. Confronted with a dying patient, he did not hesitate to consider the most outrageous proposals.

He saw, for example, scores of patients with advanced, metastatic breast cancers. The women invariably died, most within a year and in terrible pain, especially once the tumor had spread to their bones. Moore was troubled that medicine had given up on these women; it was his ethical and scientific judgment that no problem was beyond trying to solve. He established a team of physicians dedicated to treating these patients, and began to study the increasing evidence that certain hormones played a role in promoting breast cancer. In a radical 1955 experiment, Moore and a neurosurgeon named Don Matson began operating on the metastatic-breast-cancer patients to remove their pituitary gland—a whitish, peanut-size nerve center in the brain which controls the production of everything from estrogen to human growth hormone. The operation would shut down their endocrine systems and thereby, Moore hoped, eliminate a major stimulus of cancer growth.

Moore and his colleagues had no animal studies to point to, and the operation was tremendously risky: it required entering the skull above the right eye, exposing the frontal lobe of the brain, removing a portion just to get in far enough, then working over to the part of the brain behind the top of the nose where the pituitary dangled from its stalk. Of their first fifty-three patients, one lost the right half of her vision; several lost their sense of smell; three had major strokes; seven developed seizures; and one died. All had to go on medications to maintain minimum levels of essential hormones. Many physicians thought the whole project was insane.

Slowly, however, surprising results emerged. One patient was a forty-two-year-old woman with two children and a cancer of her right breast which had not only spread to her bones but formed thick red deposits all over her skin. She was

JAMES STEVENSON

bedridden and failing rapidly. After the operation, her skin tumors began melting away. She returned to a life at home, living in remission for fourteen months. In others, the rib and spinal metastases shrank, and their pains disappeared.

Many patients saw no benefits at all. Some lives were clearly made worse. But sixty per cent of the women improved or survived longer, and a few were actually cured—a feat that no other medical treatment had ever accomplished. With further experimentation, Moore and another colleague, Richard Wilson, found that removing the ovaries and adrenal glands (where estrogen and other hormones are produced) had equal benefits with less risk. Other physicians demonstrated similar results, and a search began for a medicine that could provide the same hormonal effects. These efforts produced the anti-estrogen drug tamoxifen, which is now a central element in both the treatment and the prevention of breast cancer.

Moore did not hesitate to expose his patients to suffering and death if a new idea made scientific sense to him. When he became chairman of surgery, one of his earliest recruits was Dwight Harken, who, during the Second World War, had performed a hundred and thirty-four successful operations to remove bullets and shell fragments from inside the hearts of wounded soldiers. The heart had long been regarded as impossible surgical territory. But Harken was young and brash, and, through trial and error, he accumulated more experience at opening the heart than anyone else in the world. As soon as Moore brought him in, Harken began attempting a dangerous operation called a mitral valvulotomy. The mitral valve is one of the four major valves of the heart, and insures that blood flows forward through the pump, instead of jetting backward. In patients with mitral stenosis (which is common after rheumatic fever), the valve becomes hardened and calcified; getting blood through it can be like trying to push a river through a straw. The afflicted die by degrees, their lungs swollen with fluid, their lips turning blue, their breathing increasingly labored. In the nineteen-twenties, surgeons had attempted opening the valve in several patients by using, first, a metal punch-hole instrument, and then simply a gloved index finger to crack through. But the results were so dismal—five of seven died from complications—that the operation was abandoned.

Moore and Harken, however, took encouragement from the fact that two people had survived. Harken's initial results were hardly an improvement. Four of his first six patients died on the table. Criticism from the medical community mounted. The surgical residents at the hospital, who had to assist in these operations and care for the patients afterward, met privately with Moore to demand a moratorium on the procedure. Even Harken began to have doubts. Still, Moore was insistent that he go on, and kept the residents in line. He pushed Harken to select healthier mitral patients for surgery, arguing that the other patients might have been too ill to survive. Perhaps doing an unproved, deadly operation was permissible as a last-ditch effort for people with only days of life remaining. But Moore wanted to operate on patients who had many months ahead of them. Harken took his advice, and gradually figured out how to improve the survival rates. In 1964, he published a complete series of more than fifteen hundred of these operations. The survival rate for those with end-stage disease was eighty-three per cent. For patients with less advanced disease, it was a stunning 99.4 per cent. The era of open-heart surgery was born.

How could you be sure that a new procedure would one day prove its worth? You couldn't. During the same period, in the nineteen-fifties, Moore led a surgical team that removed people's adrenal glands in an effort to treat severe hypertension of unknown cause. Eventually, the operation had to be abandoned; the death rate was too high, and there was little evidence that the procedure helped. But Moore's confidence in his instincts was never more bitterly tested than during his department's experiments with organ transplantation.

The taking of body parts from one being for another had a long and unsavory history. In the eighteenth century, for example, a British surgeon demonstrated that human teeth could be transplanted, and this became briefly popular in England. But it proved to be a disaster. Teeth were stolen from corpses and purchased from the poor for the gums of the gap-toothed wealthy. And though the transplanted teeth sometimes took, they also brought with them infections, including syphilis, that spread unhindered through people's jaws. In France just before the First World War, two attempts at kidney transplantation failed. Then, between the wars, there was a vogue for testicular transplants, which were thought to produce sexual "rejuvenation." In Paris between 1921 and 1926, a Russian surgeon named Serge Voronoff transplanted wedges of monkey testis into close to a thousand men. In Kansas, by 1930, J. R. Brinkley reported having performed sixteen thousand glandular transplants. Laboratory studies found, however, that within days of transplantation the grafts were destroyed by the host's rejection response. Finally, the medical profession had had enough, and shut down outfits like Brinkley's. By the nineteen-fifties, when Moore got involved, the notion of taking organs from one person and putting them into another was widely regarded as disreputable.

To Moore, though, it combined the frisson of the daring and a moral attraction: he became interested in transplantation as a way to save the lives of those whose kidneys had failed. Kidney failure—from infection, shock, the slow damage of high blood pressure—had invariably fatal consequences. Unable to excrete water or the potassium and acids that build up in the body, its victims either drowned in their own fluids or were poisoned by their own blood. It was a condition more dreaded than cancer, and medicine had nothing to offer.

In 1951, Moore, then thirty-nine, and George Thorn, the medical chief of staff, put together a team under a young surgeon named David Hume to try giving these patients kidneys from dead people. Their plans were, in retrospect, woefully primitive. Despite overwhelming evidence that the immune system would reject any foreign organ, they had no strategy for stopping the rejection process. And although they had experimented with the operation in dogs, they had not yet worked out how best to hook up a new kidney. (Should you connect it to the vessels and ureter of one of the failed kidneys, or put it somewhere else? Should you keep it warm or cold until you attached it?)

Nonetheless, by 1953, ten patients

"I'm trying to look at it from my point of view."

had undergone the experimental operation. The results were abysmal. The first patient had been a comatose twenty-nine-year-old woman whose kidneys had shut down owing to a hemorrhage following an illegal abortion. Hume found a hospital worker who let the doctors take a kidney from a relative who had just died. The woman was unable to travel, so Hume and his team did the operation at her bedside, late at night under a gooseneck lamp, the coma providing her anesthesia. They connected the kidney to blood vessels in her arm and left the organ outside the skin under rubber sheeting. Urine began dripping out of the exposed ureter almost immediately, and the next day she awoke from her coma. Within forty-eight hours, however, rejection took over. The kidney became massively swollen, ceased producing urine, and had to be disconnected. Surprisingly, the procedure gave her just enough time for her own kidneys to recover, but she died not long after from hepatitis contracted from the blood transfusions she had required. The subsequent patients did little better. Every transplanted kidney was rejected, killing nearly every patient within weeks. The one exception, Gregorio Woloshin, was a South American physician whose new kidney somehow worked for five months before it failed.

Moore, impervious to the harsh criticisms from other physicians, took encouragement from Woloshin's case. When Hume left that year for active duty in the Navy, Moore persuaded another young surgeon, Joseph Murray, to continue the work. Murray, a plastic and burn surgeon, shared Moore's omnivorous scientific curiosity and, in his quiet and devoutly Catholic way, the same unflagging optimism. Murray transplanted kidneys into six more patients, saying a prayer for each one. Again, none survived. Fifteen patients died before the doctors accepted that there was no surgical way around the natural process of rejection.

In late 1954, the team received for treatment a twenty-two-year-old named Richard Herrick, who was deathly ill with kidney failure from scarlet fever. He was incoherent and shaken by frequent convulsions; his family was desperate. He was, in other words, like scores of patients the team had seen, except for one detail: he had an identical twin, Ronald. There were a few scattered reports suggesting that skin grafts between identical twins didn't suffer rejection. So how about a kidney transplant? Richard would be the test case. By any measure, it would be a dangerous undertaking. No one could be sure that this transplant would go any better than the others. And now the doctors would be putting a healthy young man at risk—subjecting him to both a major operation and the uncertain long-term consequences of having just one kidney.

Moore approved the operation without hesitation. A series of tests confirmed that the twins were identical. Adding to the pressure, a reporter who was at a police station when the twins arrived for one of these tests, a fingerprint examination, found out about the impending operation and made the news public. On December 23, 1954, under heavy press scrutiny, the urologist J. Hartwell Harrison opened up Ronald and removed one kidney. Moore carried it to the operating room next door, where Murray placed it in Richard's pelvis and sewed its ureter to his bladder and its artery and vein to the nearby blood vessels.

Ronald recovered with ease. More shakily, Richard, too, got better. The donated kidney survived, and there were no signs of rejection. Six months later, Richard returned home from the hospital (and soon married the nurse who had cared for him). This was the first genuinely successful transplant operation in history, and the news spread around the world.

It was, in truth, a freakish kind of victory—how many identical twins needed kidney transplants, after all? But it inspired Moore and Murray and their colleagues to persist. The next year, Moore, operating on dogs, attempted the first liver-transplantation operations ever performed. Murray and the nephrologist John Merrill began experimenting with ways to suppress the rejection response, which, it was now clear, was their primary barrier. The only known immune suppressant at that time was radiation—a lesson learned from the atom bombing of Japan. So, beginning in 1958, they subjected patients to massive doses of radiation—enough to destroy all their antibody-producing cells—before giving them a kidney transplant.

After the irradiation, each patient—even sicker now, with essentially no immune system—was moved into an operating room for its antiseptic environment and one-on-one, around-the-clock medical attention. This was, it turned out, one of the first intensive-care units in the world (and a few years later Moore was among the first to convert an entire ward to function in this way). Many of the patients lived in these converted O.R.s for weeks. Once stabilized, they were injected with bone-marrow cells from a kidney donor to try to create an immune system that would tolerate donor tissue—the first attempted bone-marrow transplants—and then underwent the kidney transplant itself.

What followed, however, was a series of grisly deaths. The irradiation caused the first patient's blood to lose its ability to clot, and she died from bleeding a few days after the operation. Another patient, a twelve-year-old boy, died from the irradiation without even making it to the operating table. "Mortality was virtually complete," the surgeon Nicholas Tilney recounts in a forthcoming history of transplantation. "As a result, the medical, surgical, and nursing staff became increasingly doubtful about the entire enterprise. . . . Indeed, one senior medical resident in charge of the ward finally refused to involve himself any longer, telling John Merrill that he had officiated at enough murders and could not continue." In all, fourteen patients died before the irradiation approach was abandoned, in 1960.

In 1959, researchers at Tufts University Medical School had discovered a drug, 6-mercaptopurine, that could suppress the immune system in rabbits to the point that they could tolerate small injections of foreign cells. Almost immediately, a British surgeon, Roy Calne, began trying the drug in dog kidney transplants. All the animals died, but he reported one that lived forty-seven days without rejection, and Moore persuaded Calne to join his laboratory. Even before Calne arrived in Boston, Moore gave approval for Murray to perform human kidney transplants using the new drug. The first patient was operated on in April, 1960, and died after four weeks. The second died after thirteen weeks.

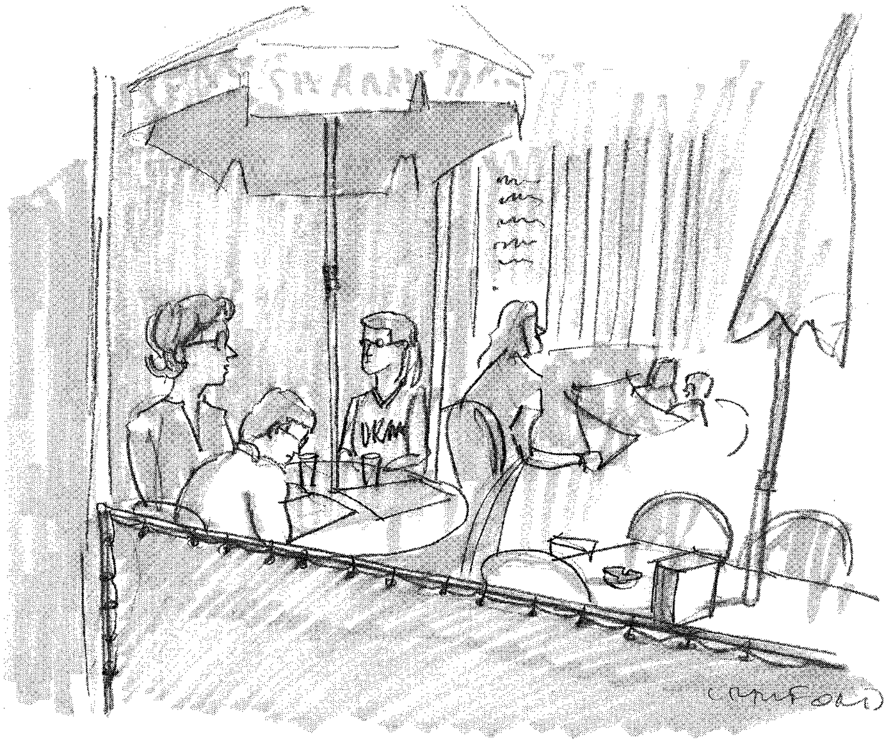
Murray and Calne tried a modified version of the drug, called azathioprine. Ninety per cent of the dogs they tried it on died within weeks. Still, in April, 1961, the team went forward with a human transplant using the new drug. The patient died after five weeks. The team tried again with another patient, using a different dose regimen. That patient died, too. In the next few months, the surgeons tried four more human kidney transplants using the drug. All the patients died.

Then, in April, 1962, after all those years and all those deaths, the surgeons had a startling success. Murray took a kidney from a man who had died undergoing a heart operation and put it into Melvin Doucette, a twenty-four-year-old accountant. Doucette was immediately, and permanently, put on azathioprine. He underwent two rejection crises, which the doctors managed with steroid injections. And then Doucette went home. He proved to be the first patient in the world to successfully receive a transplanted organ from an unrelated donor. Within months, the Brigham team had performed transplant operations on twenty-seven patients, nine of whom survived long-term. On May 3, 1963, *Time* put Moore, not quite fifty years old, on its cover. Murray went on to receive the Nobel Prize. Their results continued to improve. And kidney transplantation became a routine, life-saving operation around the world.

What kind of person can do this again and again—inflict suffering because of an unproved idea, a mere scientific hope? Inflicting suffering is part of any doctor's life, especially a surgeon's. We open, amputate, slice, and burn. I have put needles into screaming children who required two nurses to hold them down. I have put three-foot rubber tubes through people's noses down to their stomachs, though it made them gag and vomit and curse me in several languages. In many cases, I've found the prospect so loathsome that I looked for every excuse to avoid it. But you push ahead, because what you are doing will help the patient. You have experience and textbooks full of evidence that assure you it does. And, because it does help the patients, they forgive you; once in a while, they even thank you.

You also do it because you are part of a little community of people for whom doing such things is normal. I imagine that there's a limit to what I could tolerate doing to another person, no matter how good the evidence might be that it will help. I tell myself, for example, that I could never have been one of those Civil War surgeons who sawed limbs off unanesthetized soldiers to save their lives. Then again, I've circumcised babies without anesthesia just because that's the way everyone else does it.

Moore, however, pushed ahead not only despite suffering and death but also despite slim evidence, repeated failure, and the outright opposition of his peers. He was clearly a maverick. Renée Fox, a sociologist, and Judith Swazey, a historian, have published many studies of the murky, violent territory of surgical innovation, and they found that almost all of the surgeons involved—pioneers



"You two want to order something from the bored adolescents' menu?"

in heart transplantation, liver transplantation, the artificial heart—had what they called, in the title of their brilliant 1974 book, "The Courage to Fail."

FURTHER PAGES FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF ANNE VERVEINE

The carpet is not a story. It is a place,
garden of crisscrossed pathways, labyrinth,
fountain, pool, and stream.

As though the fabric had ripped at the vanishing point
at the top of the street
of ashen façades and slate-sloped roofs, you stepped

through the gap, out of your own world.
I had already lost my world.
We met in a torn design

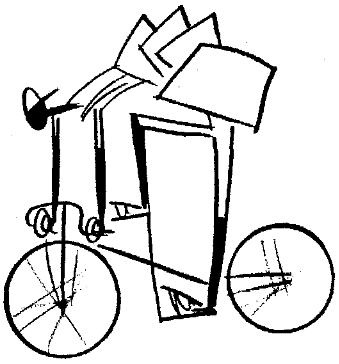
which we tore further, pulling the tall warp,
thread wrapped tightly around our fingers until it bit the flesh
and the Rue de Lille unravelled.

I know about design: it's my job,
arranging other people's letters in star charts
that phosphoresce in the dark between the closed covers of books.

It is a generous phrase. After all, the surgeons' lives were not the ones on the line. And the portrait that emerges from Fox and Swazey's work is not entirely appealing. These surgeons were ruthless, bombastic, and unbending; they saw critics as either weak or stupid. They were self-absorbed and brutally competitive. They killed patients. They were also stunningly capable leaders: their ability to find the positive in even the worst disasters was infectious. And they hewed to a simple moral stance. Moore used to tell the story of Cotton Mather and Zabdiel Boylston. In 1721, during a deadly smallpox epidemic in Boston, Mather, a clergyman, and Boylston, a doctor's son with no medical training, inoculated two hundred and forty-seven healthy people, including Boylston's own son, with pus containing wild smallpox virus. On the mere basis of an account that Mather had heard from his slave about African practices, they argued that the procedure would be protective. Boston physicians were outraged. But the inoculation worked, and became a standard medical practice. To a physician like Moore, when people were going to die, the moral position was to do something, anything, however dangerous or unproved.

I asked Fox and Swazey how the surgeons they'd come to know coped with the pain and misery and disappointment to which they'd subjected so many patients. The answer varied, the researchers said. For many surgeons, the science itself—the process of reporting successes and failures in papers and at meetings, challenging critics, coming up with modifications when things haven't worked—was how they got by. Other surgeons had to steel themselves to proceed: as they scrubbed in for another try with an unproved operation, they made morbid, self-mocking jokes about the pointlessness of it all, the torture they were about to put some poor fellow through. A few spent hours with their patients and experienced tremendous anguish about what they were doing to them. One notoriously tough pioneer admitted to sleepless nights and long bouts of melancholy. You never knew "at the end of the day, or the end of the decade, or the end of the third of the century, whether what you were striving for was actually going to be anything resembling what you'd hoped it would be . . . whether what was being pawned off as treatment might, in a very real sense, be a disease in and of itself," he told the researchers. The work, he said, "was life-destroying." It was precisely their closeness to their patients that drove such surgeons to proceed. People they knew were dying and desperate, and these surgeons felt that they were the only ones in the world willing to take a chance to help them. On the other end of the spectrum were the pioneers who simply refused to interact with their patients as people. "I don't worry about them after the surgery," one famous surgeon told Swazey. "I just leave all that crap to the chaplains."

Moore was somewhere in between. Nobody saw Moore anguish about the plight of his patients, and he didn't go to their funerals. But he did not avoid his patients, either, however badly things turned out. All his life, he had an odd mixture of prickliness and charm. His enthusiasm and articulate intelligence accounted for the charm, but he was also icy in his convictions; Moore wanted to be right more than he wanted to be loved. He was the sort of man who insisted that his family have breakfast together every morning, despite a schedule that got him to work by six, the sort of man who tolerated no opposition when he'd decided that an experimental treatment should be tried.



Renée Fox pointed out something else about the surgeons she had known: a surprising number of them came to have second thoughts about what they did. Thomas Starzl, for example, was the first surgeon to attempt human liver transplants and also, many deaths later, to succeed with them. He went on to pioneer multiple-organ transplantation, though it took him years to bring the mortality rates down to acceptable levels. Then, later in his career, his courage, or bloody-mindedness, abandoned him. In a recently published interview with Fox, he told of becoming unable to take kidneys from living donors anymore. He had never had a death doing so; but he'd had to amputate the foot of one donor, a

You knew about design from the holes
blown through your country.
We spoke in a language of no country on earth.

You moved slowly, in shadow, teaching the shadows
to echo my name. You ripped my shirt at the neck.
Was it the Beloved I held, holding you?

Down the middle of the carpet the river
weaves a thousand gray glimmers into the deeper green.
The river knows about mourning; that's its job.

How many years has it practiced? With such fleet fingers. A man
woke me at dawn this morning, sobbing and cursing in the street,
reeling from sidewalk to gutter and back again.

On my long gray street, the Rue de Lille, where I still live.

—*Rosanna Warren*

professional softball player, owing to complications, and the case haunted him. Over time, he became unable to do experimental work even on dogs.

Moore would never admit to having regrets, or doubts, not even during the most difficult years of kidney transplantation. Yet, finally, something shifted in him, too.

In 1963, both Moore and Starzl attempted liver transplants, in nine patients. All of them died horribly—bleeding and jaundiced and in shock from liver failure. The researchers called a temporary halt to the procedure and returned to the lab. A year later, Starzl decided to resume the operations, as did Roy Calne, who was now back in London. Instead of joining them, however, Moore denounced them, arguing that survival rates in animals had not improved enough. He never returned to the procedure or allowed others at his hospital to do so. In 1968, after Christiaan Barnard, in South Africa, performed the first successful heart-transplant operation and others around the world raced to follow him, Moore opposed the attempts as premature. He voiced similar concerns about the first efforts at implanting artificial hearts.

"Does the presence of a dying patient justify the doctor's taking any conceivable step regardless of its degree of hopelessness?" he wrote in an influential 1972 statement. "The answer to this question must be negative. . . . It raises false hopes for the patient and his family, it calls into discredit all of biomedical science, and it gives the impression that physicians and surgeons are adventurers rather than circumspect persons seeking to help the suffering and dying by the use of hopeful measures." Cautious experiments in animals were mandatory, he argued, before such measures could be tried in human beings.

His position was hard to fault. Only twelve of the first hundred and thirty liver recipients were long-term survivors. Heart transplantation had even worse results: of the first hundred heart recipients, ninety-eight died in less than six months. Cardiac surgeons were forced to call a moratorium on the procedure, and years passed before animal experiments were thought successful enough to justify broad-scale human trials again. Moore's doctrine became widely accepted policy. New technologies and operations for the terminally ill now require far greater levels of proof in animal trials before use in human beings is accepted. A few years ago, human gene-therapy experiments were brought to a halt by a single death. The doctrine made Moore a hated figure among animal-rights activists—they staked out his house, prompting him to buy a .38-calibre Smith & Wesson for protection. It would also have forbidden nearly every experiment he and the surgeons under him had conducted in the previous thirty years. Moore had helped make medicine bold, unafraid, and at times disturbingly invasive; this was suddenly the era of intensive care, of chemotherapy and open-heart surgery and organ transplantation. But Moore himself never experimented with a major new therapy in human beings again.

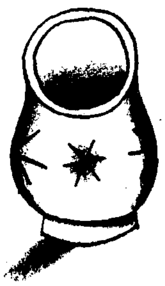
Moore changed, as did the rest of us. We no longer tolerate surgeons who proceed as he had once proceeded: we call them cowboys if we're being generous and monsters when someone dies. We prefer the later Moore, the Moore whose almost blind scientific optimism was replaced by caution and carefully modulated skepticism. This was the Moore who was among the few to testify before Congress, in 1971, questioning whether Nixon's War on Cancer had any chance of a rapid victory. As a medical adviser to NASA, starting in the Apollo era, he raised serious, still unanswered concerns about the radiation risks that astronauts might incur from prolonged travel in deep space. Through the nineteen-seventies, he conducted a landmark series of studies of American surgical care and reported unexpectedly high rates of failure and complications.

This was also the humanist who, in the nineteen-sixties, wrote a handbook entitled "The Dignity of the Patient" and required all his surgical residents to read it. He was solicitous in the care of his terminal patients. Although his bedside manner wasn't especially warm—he remained more fatherly than familiar to patients—he expected his residents to regard all the details of patients' care as their responsibility: not just medication doses and test results but the easily forgotten basics of care, such as keeping weak and failing bodies clean, lotioned, neatly dressed, turned and repositioned, free of pain. It was among his most fiercely held criticism of today's medicine that nurses no longer comforted or touched patients the way they used to. And as he became older he grew angry at the possibility that he, too, could die this way—subjected to the kind of routine medical aggressions that his own work had made possible.

Moore was himself a terrible patient. At a surgical conference in San Antonio, in 1994, he contracted Legionnaires' disease. He was shaking with chills and sick with pneumonia. But he was convinced that the hospital was more likely to kill him than the bacteria were. He hounded the doctors mercilessly, refusing a CT scan that they ordered and demanding that they justify even the antibiotic they prescribed.

When I was a junior resident, I cared for him during a one-night stay after he'd had a hernia repaired. He was eighty years old and questioned the doctors relentlessly about the anatomical details of his hernia, and about whether the repair was done properly. (The surgery failed, as it happened, and he had to return to get his hernia fixed again.)

He was used to thinking of himself as more or less invincible—not an unusual sentiment among doctors, but one that was bolstered by the luck he thought he'd had. During the Korean War, when he was thirty-eight, he was a surgical consultant to the MASH units. Flying along enemy lines, the Army L-5 two-seater he was in came under artillery fire and he was hit. Yet he somehow escaped critical injury, taking a bullet in his right arm, nowhere else, and without any lasting effect. When he was in his seventies, he developed abdominal pains, and a CT scan revealed a large mass in his pancreas. His doctors suspected advanced cancer, yet the mass proved to be benign. Surviving that, he only became surer that he was somehow different from everyone else.



Moore had been physically active all his life, his emphysema notwithstanding. He rode horses, hunted, fished; he acted in, and played music for, society theatre. He sailed competitively, once coming in second in the Halifax Race from Marblehead to Nova Scotia, and he kept up sailing for years after he retired from his surgical practice, in 1981, at the age of sixty-eight. He published scientific papers well into his eighties. He took up a campaign against managed care. In 1997, he and John H. McArthur, the former dean of Harvard Business School, published a landmark article proposing a national council on medical care, modelled on the Securities and Exchange Commission, to oversee the medical and financial standards of commercial health insurers. In 1988, when his wife, Laurie, to whom he had been married for fifty-three years, died in a car crash, he grieved and recovered and then got married again, to Katharyn Saltonstall, the widow of a longtime friend.

Then, in 2000, when he was eighty-seven, his family noticed that he was experiencing shortness of breath. He denied it, of course, but he got winded just walking along the sidewalk. He had to stop every few steps to make it up a flight of stairs. He couldn't continue with his regular sails on Buzzards Bay. Finally, he agreed to see his internist. Listening to Moore's heart, the physician heard a soft *whoosh* where there should have been a *lub-dub*. A weak valve was causing his heart to fail.

Once Moore accepted the diagnosis, he decided that he needed an operation. He wanted a surgeon to open his chest, put his hands inside, and make the problem go away. But his case wasn't bad enough for surgery. The doctors sent him home with prescriptions for drugs he'd have to take for the rest of his life—Lasix (a diuretic, to reduce the fluid congesting his heart and lungs) and Digoxin (a cardiac stimulant). He hated the idea of being dependent on the pills, though, and he didn't take them. His condition worsened.

One day, he couldn't catch his breath. He was admitted to the hospital, where he was given oxygen, threaded with catheters, and infused with enormous doses of diuretics that squeezed gallons of fluid from his lungs. His breathing soon stabilized and, over the next few days, became easier again. Before long, the doctors gave him a handful of prescriptions, and a lecture about taking them, and sent him home.

Thanks to the medical care he had helped create, this eighty-seven-year-old man could have expected to live five and a half more years, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. A gradual, protracted downward spiral is now taken as the norm; it was not a prospect that Moore could regard with any equanimity. His mind was still strong. But he was too frail to travel to scientific meetings. His life had become constricted; he knew he would never feel strong again.

Moore was contradictory on the subject of death. In his later years, he emphasized its inevitability and worried that science was keeping people alive too long. In a memoir, he told the story of an eighty-five-year-old woman he had taken care of who was badly burned in a fire. Her face and upper chest were gone. She was on a ventilator, and would need numerous skin grafts and weeks of care. Her odds of surviving were poor. If she did make it, she'd never eat normally or see normally again. Her husband had died. Her daughter hadn't seen her for years. A grandson came to visit just once. So when her condition began to worsen, Moore went ahead with his own decision. "We began to back off on her treatment," he wrote, and "when she complained of pain, we gave her plenty of morphine. A great plenty. By the clock. Soon, she died quietly and not in pain." He even advocated that doctors recognize euthanasia as a part of their responsibilities.

At other times, however, he insisted that death be fought, forestalled by any means necessary. In 1998, the wife of a close friend had become sick with diabetes, heart disease, and an ischemic, unremittingly painful leg. A vascular surgeon had attempted an arterial bypass to restore blood flow to the leg, but to no avail. Moore sent his son Chip, who was also a surgeon at my hospital, to see her. "There's a syringe of morphine in the drawer," she told Chip. "End this for me." He argued with her. Her vascular surgeon believed that her leg would gradually get better, he said. "He's wrong," she said. Her family needs her, he said. "I have nothing more to give them," she replied. He refused to administer the lethal shot. But when he saw his father he told him that, in his heart, he thought that she was right. The elder Moore exploded in rage that his son would even contemplate it.

About a year and a half ago, two days after Thanksgiving dinner with his son's family, and just after finishing breakfast with his wife, Katharyn, Francis Moore went to his study, shut the door, took out his old Smith & Wesson from the desk drawer, put it in his mouth, and shot himself. In his journal, which his family has kept private, he had evidently contemplated the idea on several occasions. In one entry, a few days earlier, he had written something to the effect that "today is the day," only to follow it with an entry saying that things hadn't seemed right after all. There was nothing self-pitying in what he wrote or said during his last few months. But he had kept the gun clean and hidden for no other purpose than to end his life.

"Was I surprised by his suicide? Not at all," Robert Bartlett, a Michigan surgeon he was close to, told me. Several others said the same thing. I found it unnerving to talk to Moore's surviving friends and colleagues about his decision. "If you ask any of us, we all have some kind of plan," one told me over tea and cookies in his small, neat assisted-living apartment with a red emergency button by the door. He had, he confided, a special bottle of pills in his bathroom cabinet.

There was principle in Francis Moore's death, but also something like anger. He left no note, despite having left a written legacy in every other respect. He shot himself with his wife in the house—to hear it, to find him with his brains sprayed all over the study. There was also, it must be said, a characteristic degree of obliviousness of the pain he could and did cause others.

"We stand to pick up some Iraqi waste-management contracts."

Which Moore was the better Moore? Strangely, I find that it is the young Moore I miss—the one who would do anything to save those who were thought beyond saving. Right now, in the intensive-care unit one floor above where I am writing, I have a patient who is going to die. She is eighty-five years old, a grandmother. She was healthy, on almost no medicines besides a daily aspirin, and lived on her own without difficulty. A few days ago, however, she developed an ache in her abdomen which grew until she was rigid with pain. In the emergency room, we discovered that she had a strangulated hernia, and, in the operating room, we saw that what had been strangulated was a long loop of now purple and dead intestine. We excised the gangrenous bowel, stapled the two ends back together, and fixed her hernia. In the I.C.U., she improved rapidly. But the gangrene had unleashed an inflammatory response that swept through her whole body. In a process known as the adult respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), her lungs became stiff, fibrous, and increasingly incapable of exchanging oxygen. Now that we have given her as much oxygen and support as we could and still failed to restore the O_2 levels in her blood to normal, her death seems almost certain.

I spoke to her family outside the sliding glass doors of her room and told them this. They were subdued and unhappy. "Isn't there anything more you can do?" one of her children asked. And what I told him was "No." Strictly speaking, though, that wasn't true. Certainly, we have done everything that the textbooks and journals say we should do. But in an earlier era Francis Moore would have insisted that we use our science and ingenuity to come up with something else. We could try, for example, using a potent recombinant protein called drotrecogin alfa, which was recently found to interfere with inflammation and to reduce mortality in patients suffering from systemic infections. We could try putting her in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber. We could try liquid ventilation. We could try injecting—I read about this once—fluid from pig lungs into her airways. None of these therapies have been shown to work in animals, let alone in adults with ARDS. The expense would be high, and they carry serious risks of increasing her suffering or killing her outright. The recombinant protein, for instance, costs more than ten thousand dollars and can cause severe bleeding. Colleagues and superiors would think I was mad and cruel if I used any of them. But it's not inconceivable that one of them could work, maybe even allow her to go home a week from now.

The family told me that she was clear about her wishes: if there was nothing more we could do to improve her situation, she did not want to be kept on life support. So we will do nothing more. Tonight her heart will slow, then stop completely. She will go peacefully, and that is good. She has had a long and happy life. But I can't help thinking about the costs of our caution. There would once have been a time, under Francis Moore, when we'd have been trying something, anything—and maybe even discovering something new. ♦

FICTION

DICK

BY ANTONYA NELSON

The evening sun was a giant peach in the rearview mirror, apocalyptic and gaseous as it burned toward the horizon. The daily paradox of Los Angeles: toxic beauty. But, for once, Ann Ponders was grateful for the pollution; it capped an argument that she had been making for months. For clean air, for their health, she told herself, they were leaving the only home that her children had ever known. Her husband and son had taken the family's first car early that morning. But then, moments before Ann was to drive the second car away, the cat had escaped, and she and her eighteen-year-old daughter, Lizzie, had had to wait in the hot empty house for the fickle creature to return. All day they'd sat on the tiled floor in the vacant dining room, or on the kitchen counters, air-conditioning disabled, refrigerator door hanging open, fan inoperable. The outside generator ran the pool, sprinkler, and security systems, but inside all was stultifyingly dead. Every few minutes they hauled themselves up from their slump on the floor to make another useless perimeter sweep. "Kitty, kitty, kitty?" one or the other of them had been calling for hours, circling the yard, the culvert, the street. Neither cared for the cat—she peed on pillows, sharpened her claws on pants legs, licked herself neurotically—but Cole, the eleven-year-old, who'd ridden away with his father at dawn, needed Winky. Taking Winky the thousand miles east to their new home, their hideout in the hills, was non-negotiable.

"Hate that fucking cat," Ann murmured; the only thing saving the animal was the image of it curled in the armpit of her sleeping son. She hated a few other things, too, such as the way she looked in shorts and a tank top, especially compared with Lizzie, who looked beautiful in whatever she wore. What consolation did age provide? Ann wondered. Bragging rights for having arrived at forty-five or sixty or ninety-nine? You didn't come through intact, that much was clear. Moreover, the interesting things happened early, a piece of information that Ann was consciously, uncharitably, withholding from her daughter. Packing up their belongings, she'd found crayoned pictures that Lizzie had drawn for her, covered with hearts and a round-headed tribe of people with drunken smiley faces, pledging exclamatory, boundless love. The toddler who'd given herself to those drawings was gone, her features turned angular, her thoughts sour and secret. Easy to love children, harder to love grownups. When Lizzie was only fourteen, Ann had been shocked to discover that she shaved her pubic hair. At fifteen, Lizzie had filled her notebooks with stick figures having scary sex, and then there were the sickening song lyrics that pulsed from her bedroom stereo, the "FUCK ME" and "CUNT" she'd markered onto her shoes. Now, unbidden and often, Ann was visited by one or another of these images, a slide show starring her sunny child who had become an alarming adult. The only help was to picture her boy, Cole, walking toward her with, say, a cookie in each hand—one for himself, one for her.

Lizzie's cell phone tweetered in her hip pocket and she studied its pink face plate nonchalantly. "Grandma," she told Ann. When Lizzie raised her eyebrows and held out the ringing phone, Ann shook her head and stepped back, as if her mother could reach through the line for her. "I'm not here," she said.

Lizzie engaged the line and listened. "Neither is Grandma," she said. "She must have called by accident. *Grandma*," she yelled into the phone. "*Pick up, Grandma.* She's in the cafeteria," she told Ann. "I can hear silverware. Old people muttering."

Even if Ann's mother had called on purpose, she probably wouldn't have remembered why. Alzheimer's had been stealing her for years now, and the collapse of the World Trade Center towers eleven months earlier seemed to have taken whatever was left. "I used to live in New York," she'd said that day, those words and no others, a refrain to accompany the repeating television footage, a refrain that was perhaps her last coherent response to the world—a defense mechanism of the mind, a pressure valve in the heart. She'd had to be moved from one part of her assisted-living facility to another, demoted to the wing where the rooms were more like cells and the assistants more like wardens—wardens or puppeteers, whose patients were wooden dolls that it was their job to animate. Ann's mother lived this sentence, this shapeless continuous performance, occasionally making random accidental calls, as a fleeting piece of will or inadvertency exerted itself. Ann could leave L.A. now because her mother would never know that she was gone.

"Or maybe it's bingo," Lizzie was saying, tuned to the tabletop or the linty interior of her grandmother's handbag. "Grandma is telling Mrs. Carlyle to stop scaring her."

"Mrs. Carlyle is dead," Ann said. "Your grandmother always *thinks* someone is scaring her. It used to be me."

"How?"

"By being myself."

"Same way I scare you," Lizzie said cheerfully.

"I guess."

While packing, Ann had also uncovered an old cache of drug paraphernalia—stale pot, brass pipe, razor, and rolled dollar bill—duct-taped inside her own bathroom cupboard. Her clever, duplicitous daughter knew that her parents would never think to look right under their own noses, this girl who also was prone to lose and forget things. "About your grandm—"

"Jesus! I'm *going* to visit. Whose speed dial did she just hit, anyway? You've reminded me eight million times. Why do you have to endlessly repeat things, like I'm an idiot?" Lizzie tucked her cell phone under her chin as she reached around to scratch her back, the pretty knob of her shoulder thrust forward, her halter riding up over the hollow stretch of her belly, the whole smooth suit of skin she wore without thinking. She clapped the phone shut like a castanet. "Goodbye, Grandma. Can we go sit in McDonald's?"

"I don't want to miss Winky," Ann said. But, really, she just didn't want to be out in public showing so much of her own flesh. She'd planned to be hidden in the car all day, the car that was old and likely to overheat, stuffed full of breakables and a yowling cat in a box who would dictate drive-through food and quick pit stops—a series of factors that had led her to her regrettably skimpy outfit. Wife-beater, her shirt was called; fringed cutoffs.

"Can *I* go sit in McDonald's?" Lizzie wasn't being rude, Ann reminded herself; she was just asking a question. If Cole had asked, she'd have let him go, Cole, who would have returned bearing an order of fries or an apple pie for his mother. Why always this flare of anger with her daughter?

"Go ahead," she said, and Lizzie

NEIL WILDER

walked away, swinging her hips, the lovely thinness she had accomplished through starvation and speed more evidence of that plaguing paradox. You could see the McDonald's sign from the front door of the house, Toys R Us behind it—Mobil, Exxon, Wendy's, competing like the waving hands in a class of eager children. At Ann's future home, in Colorado, there would be no plastic signs in sight. Never again from her yard would she hear the muffled sound of a genderless voice at a drive-through intoning, "Please pull forward."

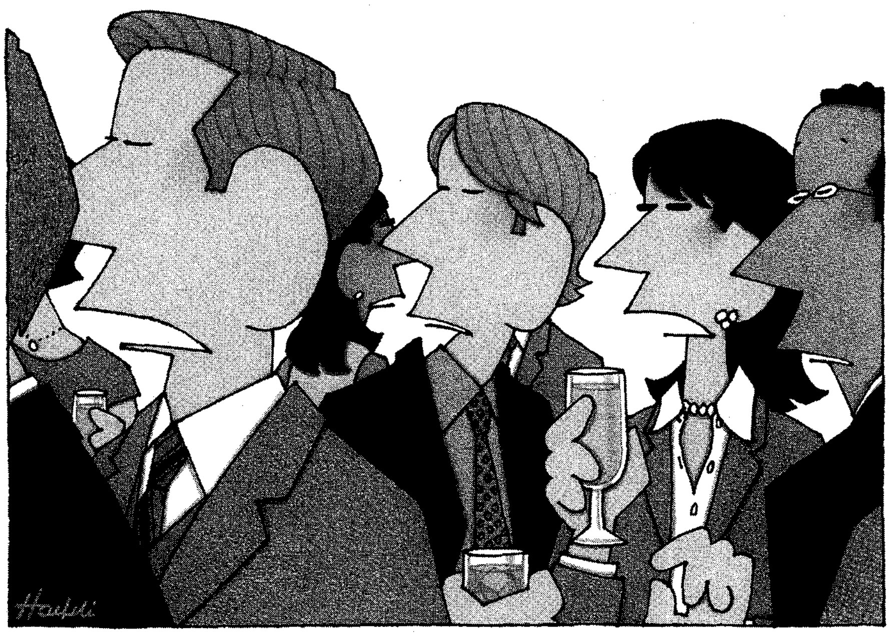
Cold water still sputtered from the bathtub spigot, tepid and chlorine-scented and already vaguely rusty. Ann sat on the rim dousing her legs. When a knock came—the doorbell was electric, she reminded herself—she had an absurd apprehension that her mother had somehow, in record-shattering time, finagled her way over here from the center, with some cabbie or unwitting do-gooder who'd found her in bedclothes on the street, waving her bingo card. How did she continue to remember Ann's address when she often couldn't remember Ann herself? When she did remember—the truth of her situation dawning, however briefly, upon her—she was furious with Ann, as if a colossal conspiracy had been cooked up behind her back. And so it had, Ann thought. But soon her mother's forgetfulness returned—like a painkiller kicking in—and she'd go back to playing the coy dingbat, the innocent coquette from the cocktail parties of Ann's youth. The knock sounded again; more likely it was Lizzie at the door, needing cash. Ann vowed not to get mad at her daughter, who, staying behind to attend U.C.L.A., would be charged with visiting her difficult, declining grandmother by herself.

On the stoop, Ann found her son's friend Dick.

"Dick!"

"Ma'am." He looked not at her face but in a blinking circle around her, as if following the flying course of a gnat. His odd-shaped head showed the track lines of a recent buzz cut, a monthly ritual that his father executed in the family's front yard. "I came to say goodbye to Cole," he said diffidently. Dick never showed much life around adults, as if the effort would be a wasted one, or maybe he was afraid, the inherent dread that a smaller creature has of a larger one. Alone with Cole, however, he was a clown, silly and affectionate. Ann eavesdropped on them, touched by how they loved to laugh, how politely deferential they were with each other, butts wedged into one captain's chair in front of the computer, drawing cartoons with their heads tipped together, building forts that featured not weapons but foodstuff and flashlights. "*Watson*," they addressed each other in hissing British accents, partners in mystery and adventure.

"Oh, Dick, I'm so sorry. Cole is gone!" Ann flushed—guilty, sorrowful. She'd engineered this separation of best friends. Subtly but relentlessly, slowly undermining her family's connections to L.A., this last muddled and frightening year, nudging them off their foundations and onto the road, away.



"He's been pointillized in the Wall Street Journal."

"Gone?" Dick said, his face falling.

"I'm so, so sorry, Dick."

"Gone?" he repeated. Had Cole forgotten to say goodbye? Dick lived down the street. The two boys had come home from the hospital only a week apart; together, they'd pedalled their Big Wheels back and forth on the sidewalk as toddlers, then braved kindergarten with matching backpacks and lunchboxes. For years they'd gone around with their arms slung over each other's neck. "We're not gay," they had informed Ann sincerely one day. "We're like brothers." When Dick called on the phone, he always announced himself: "Hello, this is Dick." That name like a punch line, a throwback from the nineteen-forties: Dick and his sidekick, Jane, and their dog, Spot. The boys had been friends for years before Ann realized that her husband shared Dick's full name. Richard, however, had never let anyone call him Dick. What had Dick's parents been thinking?

But Cole probably seemed like a strange name to Dick's parents. Their bedraggled ranch house was surrounded by chain link, inside of which roamed two Rottweilers—"the living moat," Dick's father called them. These dogs would leap and froth when anyone approached the yard, eventually turning their ecstatic fury on each other, one chomping into the other's throat until there was a whimpering retreat. In the house proper, Dick's family bred Rottweilers; a litter was nearly always on the way or occupying a kids' plastic play pool in the living room. The house smelled intensely, nauseatingly, of dog—Dick carried the gamy odor with him, on his clothes and in his hair. You could smell it on the pillow after he'd spent the night. His father, who insisted that all children call him "sir," believed in discipline and respect, rules and belts. On the rare occasions when he, instead of one of Dick's brothers, came to retrieve Dick, he stood rocking on his heels at the Ponderses' front door, refusing in his clipped manner—"No, Ma'am"—the invitation to step inside, as if Ann had greeted him naked, holding a highball. Her easy willingness to allow him entry somehow violated protocol. She had no watchdog or fence; she didn't even seem to realize that her husband wasn't home. When the boys came tearing breathless from Cole's room, a sober palm would be clamped onto Dick's shoulder, followed by a command to thank Ann for her hospitality, and then the forced march home.

Today she stared at the boy, aware that she would probably never see him again. "Do you want to come in, Dick?" But what for? She had no treats to offer, not even a chair to sit on.

"No," he said. "Thanks," he added, pawing at the stoop with his feet. "Can I go up in the tree house?" he finally asked, rolling his gaze painfully to her face.

"Of course!" Rather than come into the house, he squeezed along the side yard, beating through the unruly oleander. Ann followed from inside, watching at the kitchen window as he climbed the ladder.

The boys had been born during the Gulf War. That was the safe topic that Ann could fall back on with Dick's mother. Their politics were not the same—they knew to keep their husbands separated and not to mention the bumper stickers regarding guns on their respective vehicles—but biology had made them friends of a sort. Even as Ann gave birth, she had thought about some poor woman in Iraq having a baby. Bad enough to be in Los Angeles, ignored, as the entire maternity ward gathered around the television to watch the eerie green light of deployed Scud missiles. What if you were over there, hearing—*feeling*—them detonate? No matter where on the globe you lived, giving birth was fundamentally the same.

Dick's mother had four sons, Dick her youngest. The oldest had recently joined the Army, and Dick was supremely proud of that fact. His two other brothers—twins—were bullies, brats. But Dick was neither a bully nor a brat; like Cole, he was rangy, unathletic. They were children who deferred by instinct, not peacemakers but peacekeepers, knobby-kneed boys who had to be prompted to eat and encouraged to defend themselves against other children. Ann had liked to think that Dick found her home a respite, her family a good influence. And now he'd missed his chance to say goodbye.

For half an hour, he sat dejected in the tree house, not even swinging his legs. Finally, he climbed down, squeezed back through the oleander, and was heading down the flagstones to the curb when Ann opened the front door. "Goodbye, Dick," she called.

He turned without stopping, his shoulders slumped, scuffing his feet in baggy pants that were far too big for him. This gang-inspired fashion statement was another on the list of Reasons to Leave L.A. "Your cat is dead," he called back. His words, delivered in his typically uninflected way, took a moment to register. It was as if he were reporting that Ann had mail.

"Dick," she cajoled. He understood that she was questioning the truth of what he'd said; he had a history of telling outrageous lies—a habit, which he shared with Cole, of make-believe and stories.

"Really," he said flatly. "Look in your pool."

The air was glaringly, blindingly clear in Colorado; you had to wear sunglasses to step into it. Behind the Ponderses' new house, the foothills began, meadowlarks calling out their exhaustive song, that insistent, badgering good will. Everywhere you wanted to go, you could walk or ride a bike. The dogs were variously sized but all golden, tails like happy flags. This was the other, better West, with its flagrant seasons—first the red and orange and yellow leaves, which fell, it seemed, in a single mad afternoon, and then the snow, days and days, layer upon layer, the little city become a smooth hibernating drift, punctuated by chimneys with their nostalgic puffs of smoke. The lack of man-made racket was sometimes eerie, as if the landscape were just waiting for something to happen.

"Did we do the right thing?" Richard would ask, putting his hands tentatively on Ann's shoulders.

She would resist the impulse to shake them off, restrain the flash of impatience she felt: wasn't it obvious, this beauty just outside their door? A tangible beauty, like hard candy, something you could bite. She wanted to ignore his real question, which was about the intangible, the baffling way in which his wife, without his permission or precise knowledge, had changed in recent years. He must have sensed that Ann's love for him was gone; he was hoping to wait it out, or lure it

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home, or, best of all, to wake one morning and discover that this time had been merely a bad dream. "Of course we did the right thing," she answered, if she answered.

At Thanksgiving, Ann went by herself to the airport to meet the flight from L.A. She'd forgotten that you couldn't greet people at the gates anymore, that you had to lurk by the baggage claim. She had pictured herself standing with open arms as her mother emerged panicked from the Jetway tunnel. But Lizzie arrived by herself.

"Where's Grandma?" Ann asked, her eyes casting over her daughter's shoulder, searching among the throng of visiting mothers for that small lost one who was hers. Lizzie, hair bent at strange angles around her face, wore a peeved, defensive expression; she knew she was going to be blamed for something that wasn't her fault. The plan, the careful set of directives that Ann had supplied to a dozen different people in L.A., were supposed to have resulted in Ann's mother's arriving in Colorado for Thanksgiving.

"She bailed."

"What?"

"I know, I know." Lizzie gave her attention to the baggage conveyor belt, now honking, now disgorging luggage. "We're at LAX, our bags are checked, we have a vodka for her nerves, then another for mine, then we're in line at security—all this time she keeps calling me her abductor, but not like a paranoid wack job, like a joke, you know how she gets after vodka—then she takes one look at the guy putting his hand in people's shoes and, voilà, she freaks." Lizzie had herded Ann over to the belt as she talked, all the time watching for her suitcase. She bent now to retrieve a large boxy floral bag that Ann recalled from her own childhood. Her mother's bag, indisputable—big enough to contain its owner. Tapestry, worn to threads at the corners, part of a set that had gone with her parents many times abroad, on ships and trains, Turkish cabs, South American buses, in a former gadabout life.

"Why is your grandmother's suitcase here?"

"It was already checked. In my name. You carry it—it weighs hardly anything. God knows what she packed. She had Equal packets stuffed in all her pockets."

"Where is she now?"

"At the center. I got her a cab. She was back safe in her room before the plane even took off. I called to make sure. Why do you always assume that I'm a complete idiot?"

"I just don't understand . . ."

"Security is such a fucking hassle nowadays, and she was really pissing me off."

"Please don't talk about your grandmother that way."

"I notice you're not there to deal with her."

"I can't believe you—"

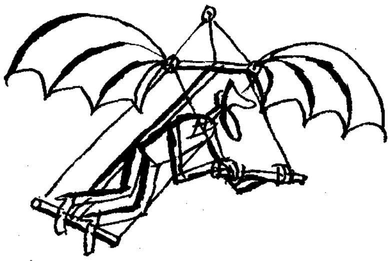
"Hey, Mom, you know what? No matter what I did, you would be mad right now. Think about it: if I come, you're mad 'cause I left her. If I don't come, you're mad because, hey, it's Thanksgiving, where's the family?" Lizzie waited for argument, her eyes belligerent. But the words "left her" recalled for Ann that it was she, not her daughter, who had done this to her mother. She let the subject drop. Lizzie turned to heave her own suitcase off the belt and began dragging it ahead of Ann, as if she knew where the car was parked.

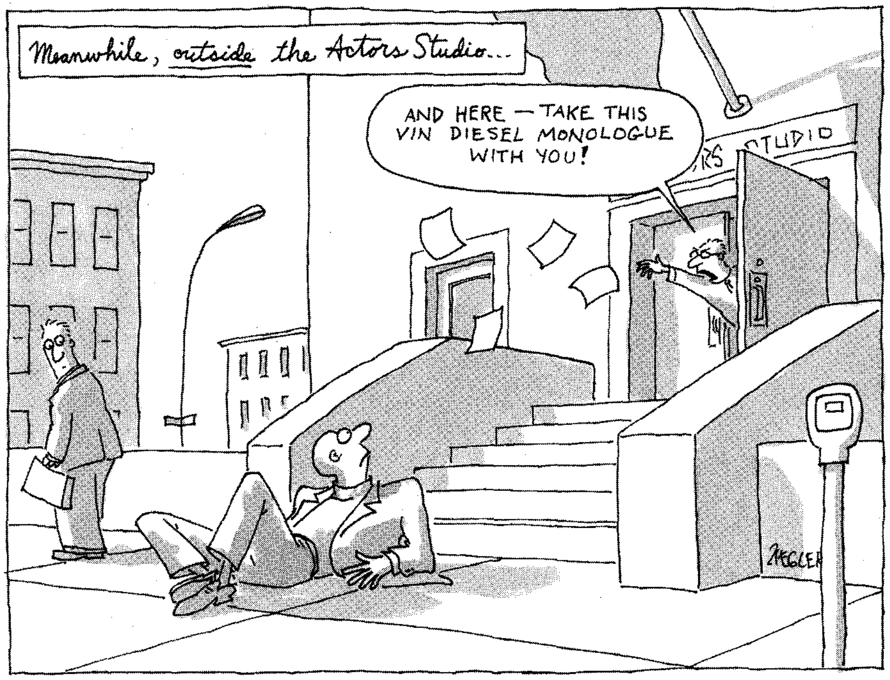
"Dude!" Lizzie greeted her brother an hour and a half later, in Fort Collins. Unprompted, he threw his arms around her. "What's with the outfit?" she asked.

"It's a uniform?" he said, looking doubtfully at his shirt.

"I let you out of my sight for three months, you go geek." He submitted happily as she untucked his shirttails and frowsed his hair. They had their own intimacy, Ann saw with a tender pang, one completely removed from her or their father. Richard was trying to catch her eye, to let her know that he saw it, too, but she wouldn't look at him. She was training herself to scorn his collusion. But why?

The children shared amused glances over the Thanksgiving table, cracking obscure jokes that seemed to be at their parents' expense. Ann envisioned them as grownup siblings. This, perhaps, was the consolation she had been looking for, the knowledge that her children would remain loyal, phone each other from their

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dorm rooms and apartments, keep track and reminisce. Someday, she thought, they would be comparing notes about their parents, lodging their complaints. Their father, Cole would speculate, had always had a soft spot for Lizzie; Lizzie would laugh—she and Cole would be drinking beer at a bar or whispering in the kitchen of one of their homes while their children and spouses slept—reminding him that their mother had obviously preferred him.

This would be after Ann and Richard were old, or maybe even dead, Ann thought. Neither age nor death seemed quite so formidable, seen in this light. She flushed when she thought of the secret she had kept for years now, her escape clause: she had given herself permission to divorce her husband when Cole graduated from high school. If she felt like divorcing him then, she would do it. If she left him, though, her children would be having a different conversation in that kitchen or bar she'd dreamed up. There would be no disagreement about whose fault a divorce was.

"Doesn't Lizzie look awfully thin?" Richard asked in a whisper, in bed. "Did *you* smell cigarettes on her?"

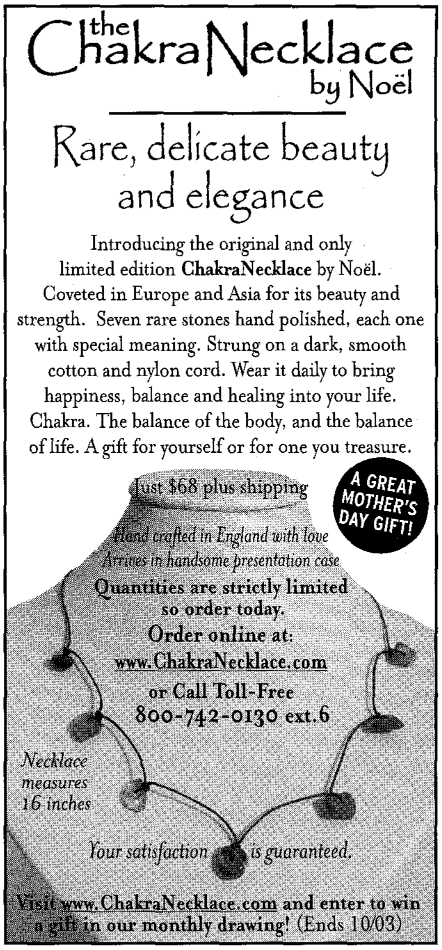
His worries seemed so pale to Ann, so little, and so late. Their daughter was no longer theirs; the world had had its way with her. Ann's anxiety had to do with Cole. What was Lizzie saying to him when Ann and Richard weren't around? It wasn't cigarette smoke that wafted worrisomely here but the whiff of L.A., that musk of volatile adolescence which had been let into the house.

"Can I call Dick?" Cole asked Ann the Sunday after Thanksgiving, when Richard was driving Lizzie to the airport. While Ann skimmed the newspaper, Cole stared out the kitchen window into the dusk. His sister's departure had no doubt contributed to his loneliness; all weekend she'd played her loud music and monopolized the second bathroom and shown him interesting Internet sites—then abruptly she had packed up her cosmetics and clothes and disappeared, leaving the house vibrantly still, the only sound the wet chugging of the dishwasher.

"Why Dick?" Ann asked.

"Never mind."

"No, it's O.K. Call Dick." Back in L.A., although they lived within shouting distance of each other, they'd had lengthy aimless telephone conversations, Cole pacing around the house, laughing and gesturing. Ann imagined him pacing through this new house, filling Dick in on all that was strange: home, school, weather. She had assured Cole before they moved that his real friends were ones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he would keep all his life, no matter where he lived, friends who were more like family. Years from now, she'd told him, you'll be calling Dick in the middle of the night just to chat. She had told him this, although she suspected that he would outgrow Dick. Dick would adopt the politics and values of his family, would follow in his oldest brother's footsteps first and enlist in the military, and then later move into the blue-collar world of his father, who installed heaters and coolers in addition to breeding dogs. Meanwhile, Cole would go to college and graduate school; he cared too much about injustice for politics not to matter, and Dick's conservative mind-set would bother him. Moving had allowed the break to seem like nobody's fault, sad yet unavoidable.

Not unavoidable, Ann scolded herself. She had insisted, she had cried, she had shamelessly exploited the national disaster to substantiate her fear, her conviction that they needed to retreat to higher ground, and her husband had finally acquiesced. "The important things," Ann had assured Cole in L.A., "are coming with us."

"Not Lizzie," he'd responded. "Not Grandma."

Like Cole, she still thought of L.A. as home. They held the configuration of their old house in their minds, as if they could return to it, sleep in its beds or boil water at the stove overlooking the window to the back yard. As if the cat would jump onto that windowsill, the way she often had, and press her dusty nose against the glass, leaving another in a long pattern of smudges.

Ann passed her son the phone and noted how his fingers flew over the keypad, Dick's number still a reflex of his hand.

"This is Cole," he said. "Is Dick there?" He paused, his eyebrows pinched. "Dick? It is? I don't know, it didn't sound like you. I guess." He paused again. "O.K. Bye."

"That was the shortest call to Dick I ever heard. What happened?"

"I don't know." Cole set the phone back in its cradle. "I don't think that was Dick."

"Maybe one of the twins was pretending to be Dick?"

"Probably." Cole gave his mother a trembling look. "If it was Dick, he sounded weird."

"Weird how?"

"Depressed. It didn't sound like him at all."

"His voice could be changing."

"Yeah," he said, unconvinced. Lizzie would have marvelled at such a phone call for a long time, turning it over with her mother, then phoning up other friends to analyze it ad nauseam, but Cole just wandered away, troubled and scowling. He had a stoic's reserve, the sort that bred ulcers, migraines. Later, Ann would mention the call again, maybe when she was tucking him into bed, on her knees with her cheek next to his on the pillow. She would tell him to try calling Dick back in a week or so, that he'd probably been having a bad day or one of his brothers was playing a joke—either way, Cole could call again.

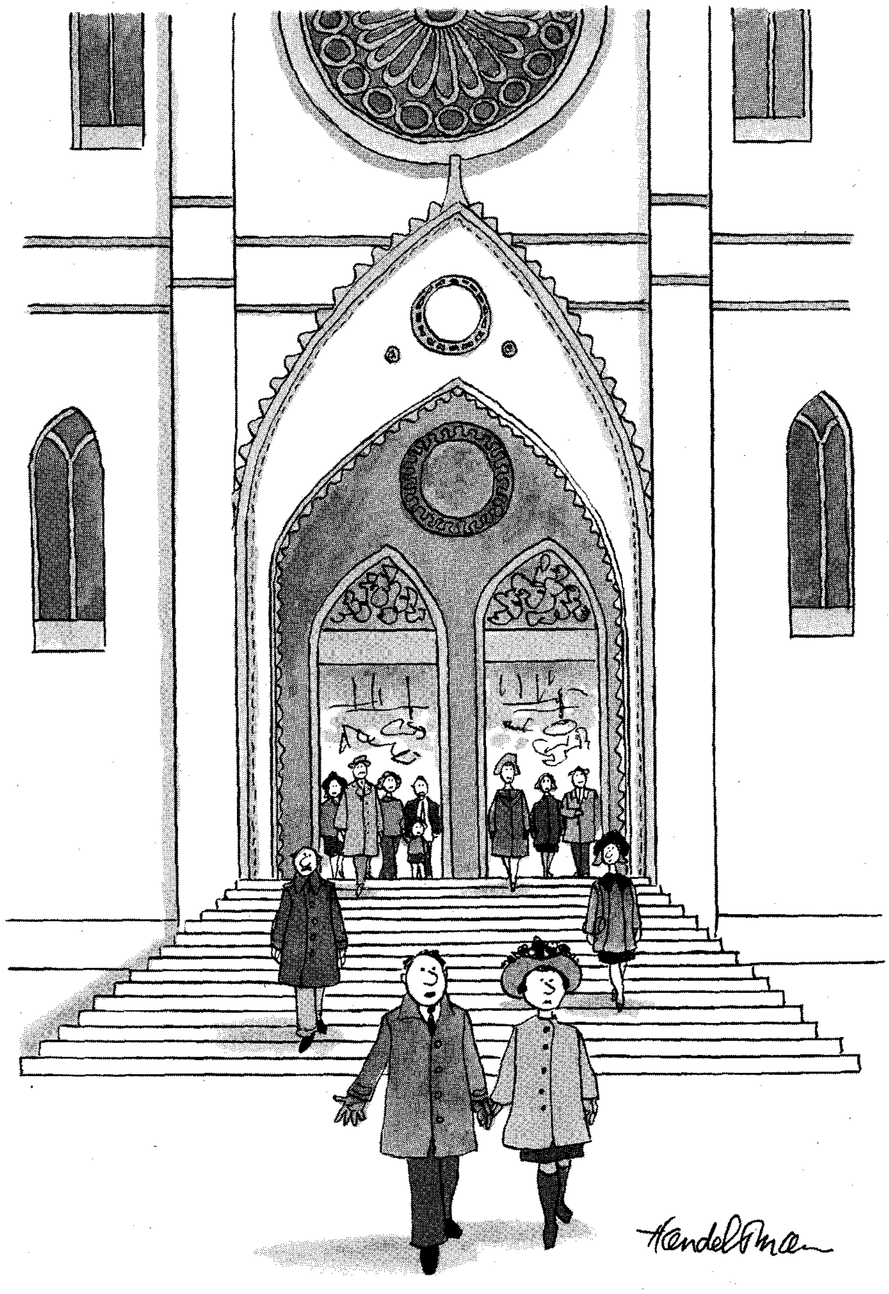
She hadn't told him that Winky was dead. Returning from McDonald's, Lizzie had found Ann depositing the cat's bloated body in the Dumpster out front.

"Oh, my God! Well, you said you hated that eff-ing cat," she said, sucking the last of her soda noisily up through a straw.

Ann whirled on her. "You think that meant I wanted her dead?"

"I'm just commenting."

"I don't like your comment." Ann



"How can I love my enemies when I don't even like my friends?"

wanted to slap some feeling into her daughter's face. The cat had been spinning in one place in the pool, held there by the action of the filter. There was something scarily beautiful about the sight, the fluttering smoothness of the fur, the animal's perfect weightless suspension and revolution. Remarkable that neither Ann nor Lizzie had noticed it before. Dick's treetop view had been better than their ground-level one.

They had agreed that it would be best to spare Cole the death of his pet. They'd say that the cat had simply not wanted to move, that she had chosen to stay in the neighborhood, that Lizzie would drive over and fill a food bowl every few days and keep them posted in Colorado. If Dick ever mentioned the dead cat, Ann decided, she'd deny it, reminding Cole what a liar Dick was known to be.

"Hi, Ann, it's Nancy," the woman on the phone said. Her voice was weary and familiar, and Ann exclaimed, generically sociable, making small talk as she tried to figure out which Nancy it was. She knew three or four. Why would this Nancy assume that she was the only one? The longer they exchanged pleasantries—Was she settled in after the move? Did she miss L.A.? And how was Cole?—the stranger the conversation seemed. At what point would Ann confess that she had no idea whom she was talking to? Finally Nancy said, sighing, "I'm really calling to find out if Dick has tried to reach you." Her voice instantly assumed a location and a body—overweight, red-headed Nancy, Ann's former neighbor, with her brood of boys and dogs.

"Dick?"

"He's run away."

"Oh, my Lord, Nancy. When?"

"Three days ago. I thought maybe Cole would know something."

Ann took the phone with her to the window; she needed to find her boy. The yard at first seemed empty, nothing but snow and the things it covered, a slight wind lifting faint glittering waves of it. And then there he was, the sight of him allowing her to breathe once more, pulling a sled, hauling logs from one end of the yard to the other, big rubber snow boots weighing him to the ground. He was talking to himself, she saw, telling a story, lost inside it. This was the kind of thing that he and Dick had done together. Their alternative universe, ready-made and waiting. Ann's eyes filled with tears; she could not bring up words. "Nancy," she said. "I'm so sorry." Sorry, and shamefully grateful, with her boy penned there in the yard.

"He's called us a couple of times, so we know he's alive. We're praying that he's just blowing off steam." Nancy sighed. "It's been such a hard year for him, you know?" she went on pensively. "He started sixth grade at the middle school, and everything was different. You wouldn't have recognized him, Ann. I mean, you know he's always been kind of shy, but he turned plain sullen. He put on weight, got pimples, the usual stuff, and he wouldn't joke around anymore."

"Poor guy," Ann said softly, gazing at her own boy, with his flawless skin, his long, graceful hands.

"And his critters started dying. The rats, the iguana, the lovebirds. I thought it was coincidence, but now I'm not so sure. I even found him pulling the legs off the lizards in the yard, like he thought they might grow back the way the tails do. But he knew better." Nancy continued talking, citing her evidence with surprise in her voice, argument, even—as if she were making a case built on contradictions. It began with his separating himself from others, missing school to hang out at the Circle K, not speaking at home, painting his windows black—black! Hiding from his family in the overgrown culvert behind their house, that harsh place full of thistles and weeds and trash. Apparently, the news of Dick's decline was something Nancy had already reported so many times that she had stepped beyond its initial impact. It was a story, one that she would probably be telling herself for the rest of her life, refashioning it as its ending became clearer. He had disappeared. He had been disappearing all year. She should have known, she would say. He was so quiet after he went to middle school. He'd started an awkward and unattractive puberty. He'd had a hard time making friends. He didn't have any friends.

He didn't have any friends. "I don't know how I'll tell Cole," Ann thought aloud, watching her son arrange the wood in the shape of a cabin at the other end of the yard, still talking to him-

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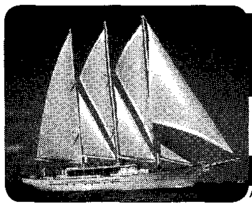

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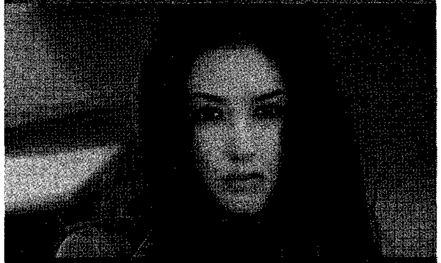

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self. He would abandon this habit, become self-conscious, probably within the next few months. It took a great deal of restraint not to drop the phone and run out and hold him against her—as if Dick might find him first and claim him.

"I'm so glad that Cole didn't answer the phone," Nancy said. "I just couldn't have talked to that sweet child." She paused. "But maybe you could make sure he hasn't heard from Dick?"

While Cole stomped through the snow, Nancy berated herself, saying that she should have known how upset Dick was, that last day, by the way he'd walked through the puddles on the way to school, "letting all of that street . . . *shit* . . . get on him." Ann was shocked. Not by the puddles—boys, puddles, what could be more predictable?—but by Nancy's resorting to profanity. "He's hiding somewhere, I know, and he's afraid to come back." His father's wrath, Ann thought, his mother's fear—the glory of his having inspired it, the awesomeness of its combined force. Nancy said, "I mean, he became obsessed with negative things—black windows and all those dead pets. When did he get so fascinated with . . . *badness*?"

This made Ann recall Winky the cat, her black body twirling in the corner of the pool, the net extraordinarily heavy with its saturated load. Her neck had been broken by a dog, Ann had told her daughter, inventing an explanation, a chase among members of the natural order that had ended tragically.

"Please pray for us," Nancy said in closing. It cost Ann nothing to agree.

Richard, listening later to the news about Dick, was stunned. He had a hard time assimilating information that he didn't want to believe. It was as if his loyal heart had thrown up a shield around him, fending off the darker impulses. She had not done what she'd told Nancy she would do—ask Cole if he'd heard from his friend. She waited until her son was asleep, until she and Richard were in bed. Then, when he began stroking her breasts, a preamble to sex, she stopped him with the news. His hand froze, moved back to his own chest, Richard immobilized, speechless.

"Those poor people," he said finally. "Those poor, poor people." He disagreed with her plan to withhold the news from Cole: he might know something crucial. What if the situation were reversed, he said, wouldn't Ann want Nancy to ask Dick?

"But Cole would never run away," Ann insisted. "And I can tell by looking at him that he hasn't heard from Dick. He'd tell me."

They lay in bed, talking quietly. Aside from issues relating to the children, they didn't spend much time, anymore, talking. "You know what else, Rich? I think maybe our moving played some part in Dick's changing. I mean, the cat was the first dead-animal incident. It was Dick who told me."

"What cat?"

Ann closed her mouth, realizing for the first time that the kind lie she'd told Cole the summer before had not been corrected for her husband. Even Lizzie had heard a truer version of events than Richard had. "Winky," she said. "On moving day." Now she explained, a revelation that made him angry with her, surprisingly angry. He rose up on an elbow and looked down on her. Why would she treat him like a child? he asked. Why wouldn't she tell him this? "I don't know," she said, miserable. He just wasn't part of her inner life; it was as if she'd already started to leave him, packing herself up in preparation, one secret at a time.

Richard lay awake beside her. Then he suddenly rolled out of bed, and Ann heard him go into Cole's room down the hall. When she got there, he was gently but insistently rousing their boy. "Son?" he said.

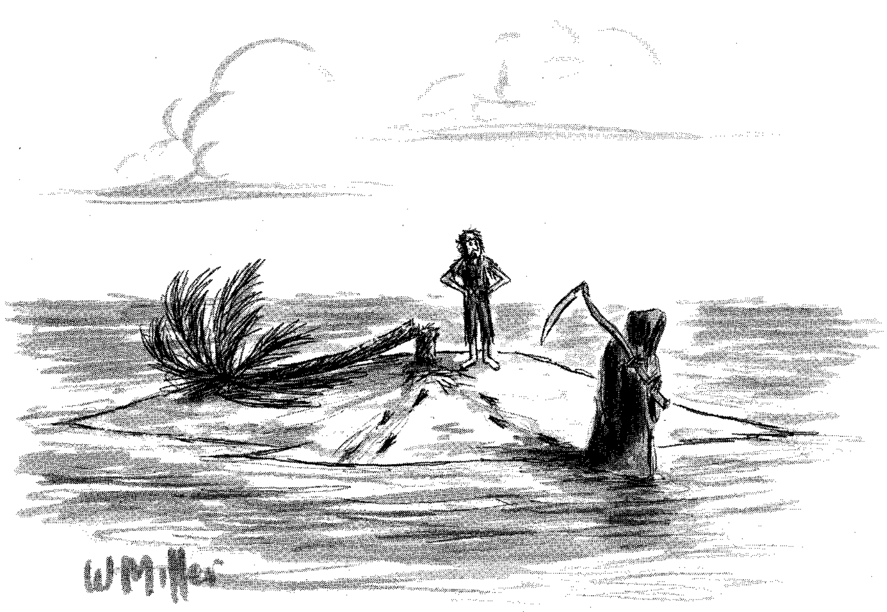
"Don't!" Ann said. "He needs his sleep."

But Richard would not be dissuaded. When Cole finally woke, he told them that he hadn't spoken to Dick since that last weird phone call.

"Weird phone call?" Richard demanded, as if Ann had withheld that from him, too.

Her son sat sleepily awestruck, a frown gathering on his forehead. "Where's Dick?" he asked.

It became a nightly query. Where was Dick? Now, as bedtime approached, Ann felt Cole's terror growing. In the dark, he imagined that the worst had happened to his friend. He imagined his worst, Dick's mother imagined her worst, everyone suffering a private fictional nightmare. At bedtime, Ann crawled in



"*That's it?*"

• •

beside him in the bottom bunk, lying there until he fell asleep, assuring him that Dick was merely hiding at a friend's house, that he would be found and brought home.

"But whose house would he hide in?" Cole pointed out. "What friend?"

Christmas came tainted. When Cole was asked what he wanted, he said that he wanted to go home and meant L.A. He wished for nothing else. Lizzie flew in from California, once more without her grandmother. This time, the woman had turned tail when she saw the cab at the curb of the nursing home.

"If you want to see her," Lizzie told her mother nonchalantly as she reached to switch on the car radio, "you're going to have to get your ass back to L.A."

Christmas Eve, Ann woke from a dream that it was Dick she'd found dead, swirling there in the swimming pool.

"What's wrong?" Richard asked, half asleep, his kind blind hand reaching, out of habit, to reassure her.

"Nothing," she said, sliding away from his touch.

Cole's twelfth birthday fell on a bitter January Saturday. Under duress, he'd invited three boys, somewhat randomly—they were in his grade, they lived nearby. The doorbell rang at noon, although the party wouldn't start until four; the cake was still baking, the decorations unhung. Ann opened the door to find Dick's parents on her doorstep, holding a puppy with a bow around its neck.

"We couldn't just sit there doing nothing," Nancy explained as Ann invited them inside. Her husband came in reluctantly, never having entered Ann's home before. But both the weather and the situation were too raw now for him to stand outside. The couple looked haunted, as if drained of a shared vital fluid. It occurred to Ann that they couldn't be completely sane at this moment. "We're looking for Dick," Nancy said. "We thought he might have come to Colorado. Gary saw it in a dream, the KOA campground in Fort Collins."

Dick's father blushed deeply inside the hood of his hunter's camouflage jacket. He was not a man accustomed to sharing his dreams, to having them made public. Nancy touched his sleeve with her free hand. This was how they stayed together, Ann saw—by giving permission, comfort, by being so much the other's missing half.

"Sit down," she said, indicating the couch before the hearth, where she'd just lit a fire. "Richard and Cole are out buying hot dogs. It's Cole's birthday." The smell of the cake baking was in the air; balloons were drifting under the dining-room table.

"And we brought him a present," Nancy said. "There's nothing like a Rot-

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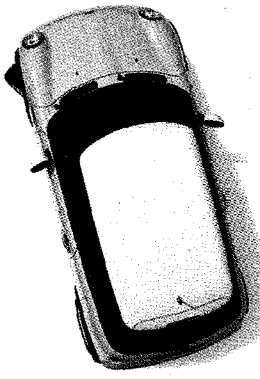

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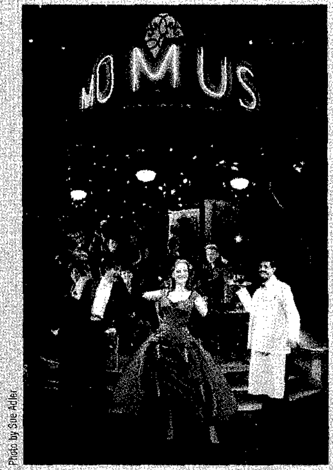

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tie, you'll see." She held the animal up by its armpits, its little lump of a penis damp on its tight pink stomach. Ann took the dog awkwardly. It smelled like the family's house in L.A., like Dick.

"What about the other boys?" Ann asked, breathing through her mouth, blinking away tears, as the puppy nuzzled into the crook of her arm.

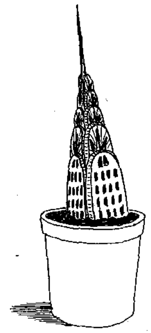
"We didn't clip his tail," Nancy said of the dog. "We thought you wouldn't want him clipped."

"The other boys are with Gary, Jr.," Dick's father said. "He was fixing to be called up for duty, but we made this a priority. We're taking a proactive, uh—" he said, waving his hand as memory failed him.

"Stance," Nancy supplied.

"Stance." He wouldn't meet Ann's eyes. Just like Dick, that way. She guessed that he resented his youngest son for preventing his eldest from serving his country in this, its time of need.

In the lull, Ann thought to offer beverages—soda, tea, water—but what Dick's father requested was wine. And she liked him briefly for it. A little sympathetic tendril went out—she would have wine, too—then recoiled as she set the puppy on the kitchen floor. Seeing it precarious on the linoleum, legs braced and quivering, she had a chilly intuition: this visit was not just to deliver a dog. They hadn't believed her when she said that Cole hadn't heard from Dick. They had come to see for themselves. She had to restrain herself from storming back into the living room, leading them on a glorious search of the premises, flinging open closets and thrusting their faces into the empty spaces beneath the beds. As if she would keep that kind of secret.



"Listen," Gary said, after tossing his wine back like a dose of something medicinal. "We want to question your boy."

Nancy reached a hand in either direction, spreading herself between Ann and her husband as if to ward off blows. "Just talk to him," she said. "Honey, we don't want to scare him. I would never scare that sweet boy."

"It's his birthday," Ann said helplessly, hearing the familiar *punk, punk* of the car doors slamming outside. Cole burst through the foyer, having recognized his friend's car in the drive, the California plates. Every adult in the room watched his face fill with the knowledge that Dick had not made a miraculous journey to join him on his birthday.

"The KOA is closed," Nancy had been saying. Ann now watched her take in Cole—his new height, the very faint hint of a soft mustache on his upper lip—Nancy's emotions so close to the surface, the sincere and fraught affection she had for the boy. Nancy would never not know Cole, Ann realized. None of them would ever not know the others. The dog, now sleeping in her arms—if they accepted this gift—would live with Ann for years to come.

Cole went directly to Nancy, laying his head on her chest and squeezing shut his eyes.

Richard did not want the puppy. Good deeds would help heal Dick's family's hurt, Ann insisted, but she wondered whether her openness had more to do with opposing Richard than with the inherent wisdom of adopting the dog. Whatever the reason, she won. She almost always won when she and Richard disagreed. He loved her too much.

"What will you call it?" they asked Cole.

"Dick," he said.

Dick the dog cried in the dark night, a strangely escalating ululation that started at around two in the morning. It was as if he were being tortured, as if solitude were killing him. Only human contact comforted him. Richard, who was the lightest sleeper, performed this role. Ann found him one predawn morning, sitting in the kitchen in the dim light of the open oven door, cradling the puppy like a baby, stroking it mindlessly. Her husband looked languorous and fatigued, in that parental fugue state of too little sleep, too much tenderness. Not every man would do this, Ann told herself. The dog slept against Richard's chest, fat paws limp and folded at his chin. It was a scene to make her heart relent. Perhaps they should have had another child, a youngster to keep them young themselves, to distract them from the leakage of playfulness from the house, to preserve innocence.

When Richard glanced up and saw

her watching him, his face clouded, as if he were ashamed at, or perhaps only irritated by, having been caught. She had done this, made him uneasy with his own love.

Cole continued to ask about Dick. One night, Ann listened from the dark hallway as Richard comforted him. "Sometimes people grow so unhappy," he said, "that they think running away is the only solution." He went on to describe the hills and valleys of a lifetime, the fact that some people couldn't recognize a hard time as a temporary circumstance. He was positing a landscape, wide and full, elevations and declivities, a map meant to reassure himself, too, Ann thought, charting something that would allay his own fears about his wife, his daughter, his life. Cole said nothing, though Ann could tell that he was listening. Even as she was grateful to Richard for his gentle intelligence, she found herself arguing against it. Surely there was some instance in which running away *was* the answer?

In the hallway, Richard passed without meeting her eyes, not exactly cold, but wary. His steps faded down the stairs. The light in Cole's room was off, and Ann waited to hear him cry or call for her, and, when he didn't, she put her face to the crack in his open door. "Do you want me to lie down with you?" she asked into the dark.

"That's O.K.," he said, declining. She entered the room anyway, and knelt by the bed, like a child saying prayers.

"What are you thinking?" she whispered. His hair smelled sour; he still needed reminding to bathe.

After a long silence, he turned to face her. "About Dick."

"What about Dick?"

"Me and him were going to live on a ranch," Cole said. Growing accustomed to the dark, Ann could see his hands folded under his cheek, the shine of his eyes. "We were going to have three dogs each, and horses." He blinked thoughtfully, recalling the place they'd made up. "And a barn cat," he added.

"Baby," she said, stroking his hair. In her mind, his ranch sprang to life; she put it in the back yard of their new home, under the foothills of the Rockies, though it had its creative origins in frenetic Los Angeles, beneath high-tension wires and airplanes and ozone alerts. "Where was this ranch?" she asked.

"Texas," he said without hesitation. A massive Utopian landscape that neither boy had seen, a giant star on a map, full of astronauts and cowboys. "Me and Dick dreamed about it all the time. We invented it in our sleep."

"Maybe that's where Dick went," Ann said. "Maybe that's where his parents should look."

"I told them that," Cole said. "They said they would, but it's a big place." She wondered how her son was picturing his friend, what he saw when he imagined Dick—Dick no longer in L.A., no longer anywhere in particular but everywhere, and nowhere, at once. He was, for Ann, fear itself, rumored, possible, unknown. Better for Cole to summon the Texas ranch and their future livestock.

"Mom, I think I know why Dick ran away."

"You do?" She feared that he would utter her own suspicion, that it had been their departure that set events in motion. That in some skewed way she, Ann, was directly responsible for that boy's sorrow, for the reverberating despair of everyone who knew him, including Cole himself, right here in his bed. She laid her head on his pillow, ready to be accused. "Why did he run away, sweetheart?" she asked.

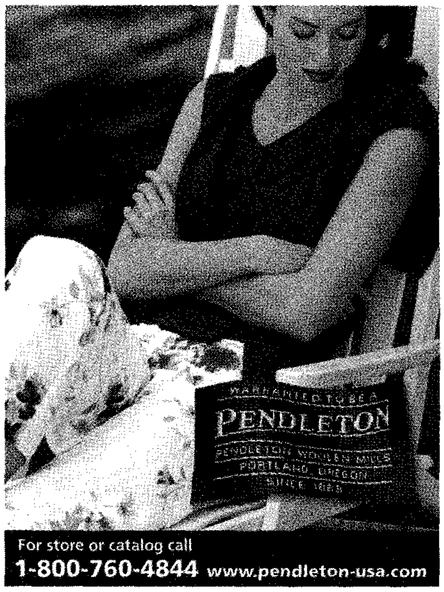
"I think he didn't want to turn twelve," Cole said.

Ann waited, but Cole had finished. She said, "But it'll still be his birthday."

"I know." Her son wasn't going to explain the contradiction; Ann would simply have to accept it, and she did. "It already was his birthday," he added.

He and Dick had thrown joint birthday parties—in Cole's yard one year, in Dick's the next—hands clasped together around a knife over a single layer cake, like a couple of newlyweds. Had Cole arrived at his insight concerning Dick because he shared the opinion about turning twelve, because he didn't find life, anymore, all that worthwhile? Ann couldn't bear to think so. She closed her eyes and hoped—it seemed a weak thing, *hope*, and it was all she had—with all her heart not. But even if he did, even if it were true, could she beg him not to feel the way he felt?

No. No more than he could beg her. ♦



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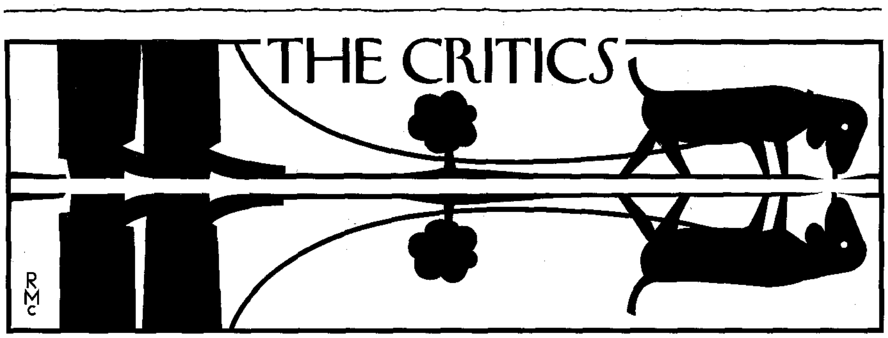


BOOKS

MOTHER'S HELPERS

A century of child-rearing manuals.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

"Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do." That is how Dr. Benjamin Spock opened his famous child-care manual of 1946, and according to Ann Hulbert's new book, "Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children" (Knopf; $27.50), such reassurance was badly needed. As Hulbert explains, the idea that the development of children might be a subject in itself, something for people to study and write books about, was largely a twentieth-century invention. Before then, parents in the United States, like parents elsewhere, saw their offspring as people who were either going to take over the farm or marry somebody on the farm next door. The wisdom of the race, as dispensed by preachers and grandmothers, would suffice to guide them to that destination. Soon after the Civil War, however, American families were yanked into modern times. The meritocratic promise made by the Founding Fathers came true: if Abraham Lincoln could become President, why not Junior? With social mobility came geographic mobility. People moved to the cities, where they no longer had grandmothers to tell them how to raise the kids. Add to this a few other trends—a falling birth rate, a rising percentage of women going to college, the transfer of faith from religion to science—and people started looking at their children differently. These small beings, who did not know how to speak or use cutlery: could it be that inside their breasts forces were percolating that would decide their fate independently of their families' plans? Worse yet, was it the case that, to influence that process, one needed to bring them up in a special *way*? Such questions, Hulbert says, gave middle-class parents a daily heart attack. To minister to them, there arose a school of experts, but the experts dispensed conflicting advice. That is Hulbert's story. On the surface, her book is a history of twentieth-century child-rearing manuals. Underneath, it is a history of twentieth-century parental anxiety.

Hulbert has a tidy mind. She divides her book into four parts, one per quarter century. At the beginning of each part, she describes a child-development conference that obligingly took place at the beginning of that quarter, and which announced the central child-rearing problem of the moment. Then, in each quarter, she locates a "hard," "parent-centered" theorist (an advocate of discipline, character-building) and a "soft," "child-centered" theorist (a proponent of flexibility, understanding), and lays out the precepts by which they aimed to reassure American parents and ultimately confused them all over again.

In 1900-25, the preëminent hard-liner was Luther Emmett Holt, the president of the American Pediatric Society, the director of Babies' Hospital in New York, a pediatrician to the Rockefellers, and the author of "The Care and Feeding of Children" (1894). Holt seems to have introduced, or at least codified, the sort of by-the-book regimen that liberal baby-care types have been banging their heads against ever since. He believed in strict schedules, for both feeding and sleeping. He said that toilet training could be achieved by the age of three months, "if begun early." He warned mothers against cuddling or playing with their babies; this overstimulated them and gave them germs. (Even a crying baby, Holt said, should not be picked up. Crying was necessary for health: "It is the baby's exercise.") Most important was hygienic feeding, which, as he described it, was bottle-feeding. His directions for adapting cow's milk for babies were lengthy and precise:

> The upper one fifth (6 ounces from one quart) may be calculated to contain 12% fat. If the milk is very rich, the upper one fourth (8 ounces from one quart) may be used. If the milk is used which has been bottled at a dairy the day before, the upper one fourth (8 ounces from one quart) may be calculated to contain 12% fat. This top milk may be either removed by skimming or the bottom layer of milk may be siphoned off, leaving the number of ounces of top milk desired. Should more than 5 ounces of the 12% milk be needed, two quarts of milk should be set.

If, after coping with that, the mother had any time left, she was instructed to keep detailed records of her child's progress. (Margaret Mead's mother, a Holtian, accumulated thirteen volumes on Margaret alone.) Thus Holt not only threw his weight behind bottle-feeding; he pioneered the notion of child-rearing as a project, a course in which a mother might get an A or an F, which has been a primary fount of parental anxiety ever since.

Reading this man's confident pronouncements a hundred years later, one trembles to think how Hulbert will judge him. But, as it turns out, she is no "presentist." In Holt's time and place, she points out, the infant-mortality rate was twenty per cent, and the cause of death was often a digestive disorder. Hence his obsession with germs. And, if he institutionalized bottle-feeding, that wasn't really his fault. He said at the beginning of his book that mother's milk was safest, but he also said that in his practice three out of four women who could afford not to breast-feed didn't. They wanted to get out of the house—go shopping, take in a play—and he saw their point. Also, his book was intended not just for mothers but for hospital nurses, who were not lactating. Nor, in the poor wards of Babies' Hospital, where he worked, did the staff have much time to play with babies—which helps to account for his antirecreational mind-set. ("That playing was even contemplated," Hulbert writes, "seems somewhat poignant.") Finally, overstimulation was a big issue to urbanites of the day, particularly those who, like Holt, had been raised on quiet farms. Holt believed—and today's neuroscientists have ratified his belief—that most brain development takes place in the first few years of life. He feared that the sheer noise of the city, with, as he put it, "factory and locomotive whistles, trolley cars and automobiles . . . door-bells and telephones in the house," would jangle Mother Nature at her work, and he did not want rattle-waving mothers to add to the problem.

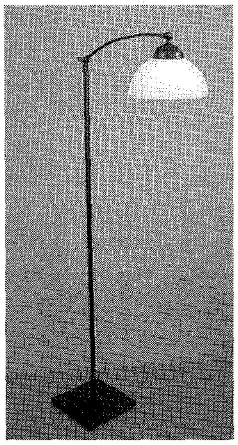
Ann Hulbert's "Raising America" offers a history of parental anxiety.

ISABELLE DERVAUX

To every expert in her book Hulbert brings such treatment: nuanced, historical. Above all, she is skeptical, particularly as regards the seeming hardness or softness of the manual-writers, and about liberal biases on that score. But it is not until the second quarter of the century, when the child-development people begin claiming scientific status for their precepts, that she really strings her bow. The soft expert in this period was Arnold Gesell, who spent two decades filming children at play in his psychology lab at Yale. Those films, Hulbert says, were basically miles and miles of raw data, and the children seen in them—white middle-class youngsters from New Haven—were in no way a representative sample. Yet in a long series of books, notably "Infant and Child in the Culture of Today" (1943), Gesell and his assistants squished their findings into a pattern, a sort of Hegelian dialectic that they called innovation, integration, and equilibrium. (Basically, the child tried something new; this upset him and turned him into a monster; then he mastered the problem and became nice again; then he tried something else new, and the cycle was repeated.) Gesell thus popularized the "stage" theory of child development. In his scheme, four-year-olds were "expansive," fives "focal," sixes "dispersive," sevens "pensive," and so on, depending on where they were in the developmental spiral.

On the surface, Hulbert observes, this was a comforting theory. Inside the child, a *Geist* was unfolding, all by itself. Presumably, mother could kick back and read a magazine. But no. First of all, Gesell's schedules created a new pressure for conformity. What if one's child was still focal when he was supposed to have achieved dispersiveness? (And what if the child next door had made it on time?) Also, to enable mothers to spot developmental lags, Gesell gave them recording duties that left Holt's homework plan in the dust. Now they had color-coded charts to fill in, on a daily, even an hourly, basis. Occasionally, Hulbert, to lend some balance to her male-dominated book (almost all the leading manual-writers of the century were men), will pay a call on the experts' female relatives. Apropos of Gesell, she quotes from a letter that his daughter-in-law Peggy wrote him about charting the progress of her new baby: "When I change her pants, I do not count the episode as social (yellow), because usually time is too brief to show up much." The image of Peggy, poised over the diaper pail at 3 A.M., realizing that, before getting back into bed, she is expected to record the social ramifications of the pants-changing episode is a good example of Hulbert's deflationary temper, and of her energetic research.

With the hard expert of the 1925-50 period, John B. Watson, she has even more fun. In the history of American psychology, Watson is known as the founder of behaviorism, the theory that human personality is created not by inner forces but by the organism's encounter with positive and negative stimuli in the environment. As Watson saw it, adult emotional responses were entirely the product of such conditioning, from infancy onward. Fear stemmed from loud noises or the sudden loss of physical support; rage from physical constraint; love from stroking in erogenous zones. As those experiences were paired with other things, human beings grew



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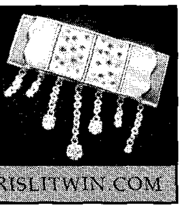

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to feel the way they felt about the world, and thus to become what they became. "Give me a dozen healthy infants," Watson boasted, and, by controlling their conditioning, he could turn them into anything he wanted. As Hulbert points out, this claim was based on next to no research with children. (Watson preferred working with rats.) Indeed, for the most part, it was mounted on a single experiment, which Watson and Rosalie Rayner, a graduate student in his psychology lab at Johns Hopkins, conducted with a nine-month-old child, whom they called Little Albert. By presenting Albert with a white rat in combination with various frights—clanging noises, a barking dog—they basically terrorized this baby into avoiding rats, and other furry objects as well. Ergo, human emotions were conditioned responses.

Watson's theory made him famous, but his career as an academic psychologist did not last long. In 1920, he was kicked out of Johns Hopkins when it was discovered that Rosalie Rayner, twenty-one years his junior, was his mistress as well as his research assistant. He went on to become a vice-president at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, where he found good use for his ideas about conditioning. (He pioneered the celebrity endorsement.) It was only then that he wrote his "Psychological Care of Infant and Child" (1928), which reads like an act of revenge against academic psychology and perhaps against women as well. (In the divorce suit that followed the adultery scandal, Watson's wife entered parts of his correspondence with Rayner into the public record. The Baltimore newspapers gleefully quoted passages from his behavioral love song. "My total reactions are positive and towards you," he wrote his lady.) He may have had a grudge against babies, too. He suggested that toilet training start at three weeks, and he demanded that mothers stop kissing and cuddling their offspring. This practice, he said, could "inflict a never healing wound," threatening the child's "vocational future and . . . chances for marital happiness." (In the event that such warnings did not do the trick, Watson added that the cuddling of children was a "sex seeking response" on the part of frustrated women.) Parents who wanted to show a positive reaction to their children should just shake hands with them in the morning. Incredibly, Watson's book sold fifty thousand copies in its first year of publication. Hulbert thinks that it appealed to the irreverent spirit of the twenties, and was born of that spirit. It was less a child-rearing manual, she says, than a social satire, in the shock-artist manner of H. L. Mencken, who was a friend of Watson's. How many of the book's buyers actually followed its recommendations? Hulbert says that this is a question with all the manuals, and that it is hard to answer.

It's easier to answer, though, with the expert who dominated the third quarter of the century. Benjamin Spock's "The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care," first published in 1946 and now in its seventh edition, has been translated into thirty-nine languages and has sold fifty million copies. Like the plays of Shakespeare or the songs of Irving Berlin, Spock's precepts have sunk so deeply into our collective knowledge of the world that it is surprising to think that they were actually made up by someone. According to Hulbert, Spock was neither hard nor soft but both. For this reason, and because of his enormous influence, she devotes much of the third section of her book to him.

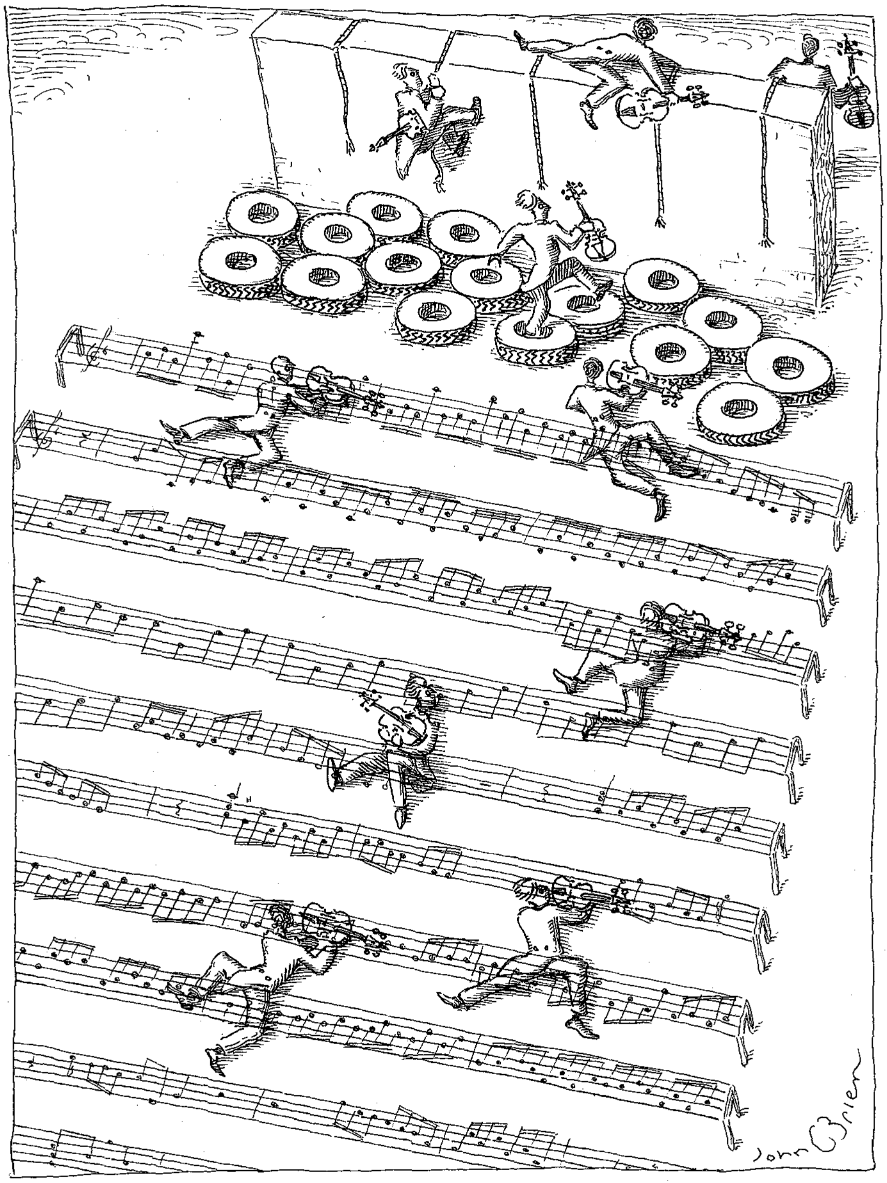
Spock was not a psychologist—he was a pediatrician—and he rarely did or even cited any research. The book, he said, "really all came out of my head." Nevertheless, he was the first important manual-writer to undergo psychoanalysis. (Psychoanalytic training, too.) Spock understood anxiety, guilt, conflict. Therefore he identified with these feelings in the mother. He offered no theory, supplied no charts, and characterized the attitude of those who did as "Look out, stupid, you'll kill the child if you don't do exactly what I say." (Here he was probably thinking not just of Holt, on whom he had been raised, but also of the Freudians, who invaded the field after the Second World War and who were energetic scolds.) As he saw it, these experts had created an epidemic of parental "hesitancy." His aim was to eliminate it.

In certain crucial matters, Spock was permissive. He recommended feeding on demand and uncoercive toilet training, and the fact that those practices are now standard in American middle-class families is in large measure due to him. He also thought that children wanted to be good, or, at least, like their parents. On the other hand—and this is what Hulbert sees as his hard side—he did not believe in asking mothers for "unnatural patience." Many manuals, before and since, seemed to say that if mothers just had the right attitude peace and happiness would reign. Spock knew better.

Consider, in his first edition, the discussion of spanking, which was a tortured subject at that time. (It is again in our time, when the experts have begun peering over class barriers. Poor people hit their kids more.) He starts with a hard truth: "We all have our troubles, great or small, and we all take them out on our children to some degree." He doesn't advocate spanking, he says, but having a rule against it doesn't solve the problem: non-spanking parents may show their irritation in other ways, "for instance, by nagging the child for half the day, or trying to make him feel deeply guilty." He then proceeds to give spanking tips: "You *sometimes* hear it recommended that you never spank a child in anger but wait until you have cooled off. That seems unnatural. It takes a pretty grim parent to whip a child when the anger is gone." And: "If a punishment seems to break a child's heart or . . . break his spirit, then it's probably too strong for him." There is something more than wisdom here. Spock had the tragic sense of life.

Hulbert acknowledges Spock's virtues. At the same time, his combination of hard and soft seems to annoy her. She sees him as a vacillator. She also takes a cold look at his domestic life. With many of her subjects, she makes use of biographical material, to sobering effect. (Watson's two sons by his second wife, Rayner, did not fare well. One committed suicide; the other had a nervous breakdown.) But no one gets the roughing up that Spock receives. His sin is that he made use of his wife and then discarded her. Jane Spock, a spirited Bryn Mawr graduate, went into psychoanalysis before Benjamin did; it was probably she who got him to enroll. While he was in medical training, she worked at Macy's to support them. As he wrote his manual, she gave him ideas, and she did the typing and the galley-reading. He became a famous man; she became a mad housewife, addicted to alcohol and tranquillizers and prone to denouncing her husband at parties. (Eventually, she had a complete breakdown and was hospitalized for six months with a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia.) Their two sons suffered, of course, and one of them, John, told Hulbert that his father made him feel "judged, criticized, scared, beaten down." After almost fifty years of marriage, Spock filed for divorce. He was soon remarried to a woman half his age. (He died in 1998.) Hulbert narrates this story in detail, with clear meaning: Physician, heal thyself. I question whether this is fair. Writers and artists often give the best of themselves not to their families but to us. For that they have to answer to their families, but do they also have to answer to us, who got the best? Also, Hulbert's historical sense, so keen elsewhere, seems to have deserted her in the face of Spock's marital arrangements. If we had a nickel for every twentieth-century author whose wife was an unacknowledged collaborator on his books, we could probably pay for the war in Iraq.

In her final section, on the last quarter century, Hulbert unleashes her final irony: after a hundred years of trying to replace grandmothers and preachers with science, the experts have reverted to grandmothers and preachers. The reason is that science has not come up with any definitive answers. Meanwhile, changes in society—above all, a rising divorce rate, a phenomenal increase in the number of working mothers, the



takeover of the home by television—have created a world that is basically inimical to children. Among the experts who have risen to address these facts, some actually are preachers, or, at least, practitioners of radio ministries—James Dobson, Gary Ezzo—where they have inveighed against the baleful effect of "ideological humanists" on American child rearing. As for the ideological humanists—T. Berry Brazelton, Penelope Leach, Stanley Greenspan—they have a few other things on their minds, notably Jean Piaget's work on infant cognition, but they, too, are preachers of a sort. Where the right worries about promiscuity, the left worries about competitiveness and materialism, but everyone agrees that we are facing a child-rearing emergency.

Curiously, the expert who seems to interest Hulbert most in these latter days is a right-winger named John Rosemond, a family therapist from North Carolina who started out as a liberal, then, as he tells it, saw the light, and in the eighties and nineties produced a number of manuals—together with lectures, a Web site, audiovisual materials, a syndicated column, and, finally, his own magazine, *Traditional Parent*—in which he denounced his woolly-brained, pseudoscientific leftist colleagues, and called for what was essentially a states'-rights approach to child rearing. Rosemond deplores parental intervention: all those moist-voiced mothers butting into the kids' business, asking them about their feelings, pretending that children and adults have the same interests. According to him, parents should give children strict rules (no TV, plenty of reading, chores galore) and then leave them the hell alone. "The purpose of raising children," Rosemond writes, "is simply to help them out of our lives into successful lives of their own." On the way, we may cherish them or not, but no manual can make parents love their children.

Why does Hulbert conclude her review of a century of child-development theory with this anti-theoretical person? I think she had a mild case of end-of-the-book blahs—her treatment of Brazelton, Greenspan, and the other cognitive folk is not thrilling—and Rosemond woke her up. But, clearly, she also liked him, if not for his recommendations then for his tone: wised-up, no-nonsense, and hence, despite his swagger, modest. On the last page of her book she makes a point that by then we are expecting: the value of a child-rearing manual lies not so much in its policies as in what it says between the lines. I would go further. Manual-writers are less like scientists than like novelists, wielders of detail and symbol, creators of a "world" in which readers may imagine themselves not just as the parent but as the child. Whatever wisdom a book dispenses is subjective—a matter of how the writer thinks about life.

In this connection, a word should be said for Fred Rogers. Mister Rogers does not make it into Hulbert's book, because he was primarily a television personality. But he wrote several child-rearing manuals, the last of which, "The Mister Rogers Parenting Book," was published shortly before his death, in February. In that book, he talks about how to get your child to stay in bed at night, and he gives completely ordinary, middle-of-the-road counsel: be nice but be firm. Then, like Spock on spanking, he adds tips, and they are everything: "Encourage your children to find ways to comfort themselves—maybe . . . making up a story, or imagining a pleasant 'dream.' " Also, "Your child might find it comforting to have something of yours to keep through the night, like a glove or a small scarf." Finally, "You may want to leave on a night light or decorate your child's bedroom walls or ceiling with glow-in-the-dark stickers. Having a bit of light reminds children that there is still light somewhere, and that before long the daylight will come again." The considerateness (the scarf, the glove) is touching, as is the resort to art (the story, the dream). But the last item is a stroke of genius, and not just for the child. In the dark of night, after the takeout dinner and the argument, parents, too, need to be told that there is still light somewhere, and that the daylight will come again. ♦

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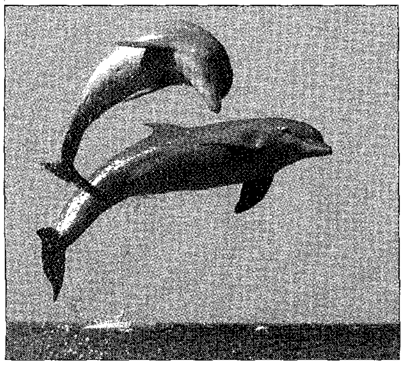

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BRIEFLY NOTED

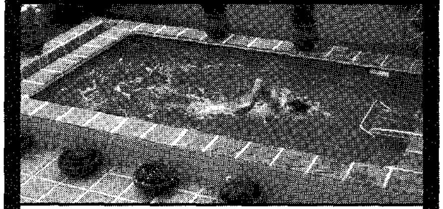
Spring Poetry

Poems the Size of Photographs, *by Les Murray (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $23).* A fad-averse contrarian, Murray has made his career writing poems about the poor, rural backwaters in New South Wales, where he was born and where he still lives. His usual fixations—with aboriginal culture, with farms, with his painful childhood (he was mercilessly teased for being fat; his mother died unexpectedly)—here give way to a more philosophical exploration of the illustrative power of words, producing poetry concerned with "international sign-code," "pictographs," and "speech balloons." These poems are brief enough to suggest that a word is worth a thousand photographs, and yield some of Murray's most lasting pastoral images: "Sheep are like legal wigs / the colour of fissured cement." At Iguassu Falls, "a bolt of live tan water / is continuously tugged / off miles of table / by thunderous white claws." Murray's punchy polemical side is in evidence, too. "I feel no need to interpret it / as if it were art," he writes of an empty but beautiful landscape. "Too much / of poetry is criticism now." "In a Time of Cuisine" is a mere four lines long: "A fact the gourmet / euphemism can't silence: / vegetarians eat sex, / carnivores eat violence."

Blue Hour, *by Carolyn Forché (HarperCollins; $24.95).* The title poem of Forché's fourth collection takes the birth of her son as a starting point for contemplation of her own childhood, just after the Second World War, an era when "it was not as certain that a child would live to be grown." The uncertainty of an individual's survival at any given point in history informs the first part of this volume, which mounts a quiet protest against the atrocities of the last century and insists that "even the most broken life can be restored to its moments." In such lines, Forché's persona—unflinching witness and eloquent mourner—prevails, but in the centerpiece of the collection, "On Earth," her obsessive documentation of inhumanity overwhelms her best lyric instincts. Forché cleverly chooses the abecedarian form—where the initial letters of the lines form a progress through the alphabet—to portray the agonal flickers of a dying mind, and yet the poem's collage of horrifying imagery feels gratuitous more often than it does inspired.

Slow Air, *by Robin Robertson (Harcourt; $23).* This Scottish writer and editor's second book of poems extends farther into the grim psychological territory mapped in his prize-winning début, "A Painted Field," examining the death of his father and some deeply disturbing dreams. Even more striking than Robertson's affinity for pain is his ability to tap into the uncanny, folkloric underside of nature poetry. He has the Romantic poet's way of finding a mirror for the self in the landscape: "A lift in the weather: a clemency / I cling to like the legend / of myself." Most impressive of all are poems after Rilke—Rilke's famous panther here "swings on the pivot of his numb and baffled will"—and poems based on Greek myths, in which we find a minotaur whose maze is a "house of many corners / but only one room."

Far Side of the Earth, *by Tom Sleigh (Houghton Mifflin; $22).* Always learned and formally adept, Sleigh, in his fifth collection, revs both diction and syntax to produce his best work yet. Despite the linguistic extravagance, the results are pleasingly transparent, and what might have remained merely virtuosic here attains real depth. A sequence of poems about September 11th asserts the importance of poetry itself, by translating a four-thousand-year-old Sumerian lamentation on Ur ("Our country's dead / melt into the earth") and a spell from Greek magical papyri, which announces, "This is the charm that will protect you."



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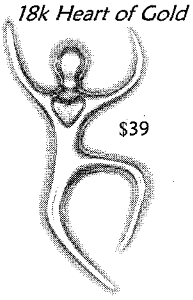

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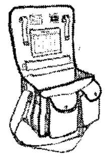

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THE ART WORLD

THE FAR SIDE

An outsider artist's scary grandeur.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

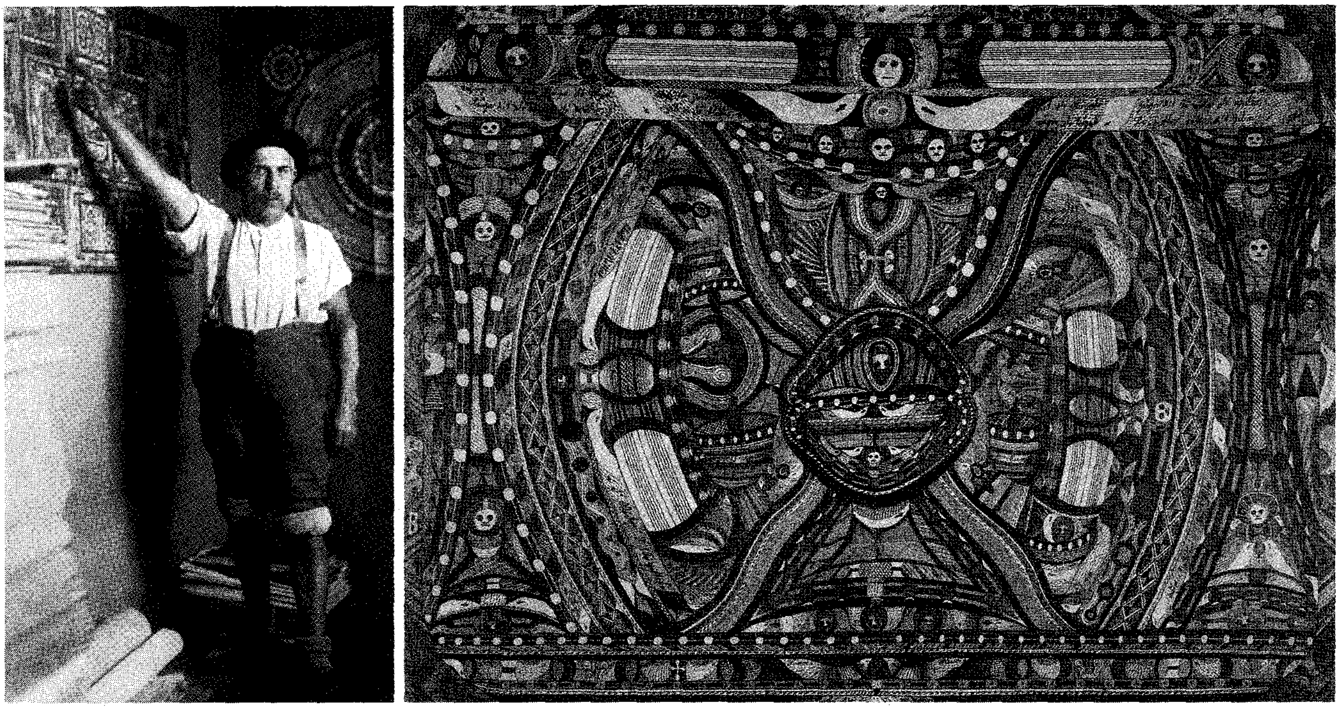
Adolf Wölfli, a Swiss madman, born in 1864, who spent the last thirty-five of his sixty-six years in a psychiatric hospital, is among the greatest of outsider artists. Indeed, he could serve as Exhibit A in a study of the outsider phenomenon: cases of wild, solipsistic genius that challenge the values of formal training and cultural initiation, not to mention sanity, in significant art. Spectacularly gifted outsiders, including Henry Darger, a Chicago janitor whose immense epic of a war involving little girls came to light after his death, in 1973, seem to represent an entire culture in a single person. So it is with Wölfli, whose large, incredibly dense drawings combine religion, sex, language, music, geography, economics, and other aspects of the artist's fantasy empire, which, for him, was more or less the universe. His achievement is a revelation in "St. Adolf-Giant-Creation," a retrospective at the American Folk Art Museum. The works' aesthetic refinement is amazing. I had known Wölfli mainly from reproductions, which cannot convey his virtuosity. Especially in his earliest surviving pictures—from 1904 to 1907, after the staff at the Waldau Mental Asylum stopped regarding his work as "stupid stuff"—he emerges as, among other things, a master of graphic design with an exceptional talent for tonality.

"Waldorf Astoria Hotel" (1905), to take one example, is a pencil drawing on four sheets of newsprint, about ten feet long. It imagines the eponymous hotel and three others (which Wölfli knew about from magazines) as elaborate palaces, embellished by ornate borders, sinuous patterned bands, exfoliating decorative motifs, cameos of enigmatic faces and figures, and passages of fancy block lettering and handwriting. The composition is jam-packed, but it doesn't feel congested or fussy. Its complex linear rhythms carry beautifully throughout the multipanelled format. One reason is Wölfli's command of finely textured blacks and feathery grays that, experienced as colors, affect the eye as musical timbres do the ear. Inch by inch, the tones subtly advance and recede, knitting together a shallow visual space somewhat like that of classic Cubism. Looking at it stirs tumbling and gliding sensations. One falls into the work's bizarrely scaled, phantasmagorical topography like Alice down the rabbit hole. And, like Alice, one may be less than reassured by the charms of the experience, which is seriously disturbing.

Wölfli, who was born near Bern, was the seventh son of an alcoholic stonecutter who abandoned his family to dire straits when the boy was five years old. From the age of eight, after his mother died, Adolf worked for room and board with a succession of sometimes abusive farm families. He did well in school, but left at the age of fifteen. At eighteen, he fell in love with a farmer's daughter and was shattered when her parents forbade her to marry so lowly a suitor. Pain and rage at this humiliation seem to have possessed him for the rest of his life. He served in the Swiss military, had affairs with a young prostitute and a much older widow, and held a series of menial jobs. He was arrested twice for petty theft. He became a predatory pedophile, and was caught three times while trying to molest ever younger girls: fourteen, seven, and three years old. He escaped arrest for the first of these crimes and spent two years in prison for the second. The last offense landed him in Waldau in 1895. He was dangerously violent for some years—at one point, he bit off a piece of a fellow-inmate's ear—until his energies became wholly absorbed in drawing, writing, and musical composition.

Wölfli wasn't much more than five feet tall, but in photographs he is formidably tough-looking, with bulging muscles, a bristling mustache, a tobacco plug in his cheek, and a taciturn stare: a man with a mission. He couldn't stand to be contradicted. (For example, he became agitated whenever it was pointed out that his abundant composition of polkas, mazurkas, and other folkish music—which he would play with a horn of rolled-up paper—was notated on absurd six-line staffs.) His desperate need to work made him somewhat tractable. He was kept on a ration of one or two pencils a week until 1907, when a psychiatrist named Walter Morgenthaler arrived at Waldau and took an interest in him. Colored pencils were added to Wölfli's tools. Though his use of color is often strikingly original, it tends to disrupt the unity that he achieved with shading alone. His work increasingly centered on megalomaniacal illustrated books, which total about twenty-five thousand pages of story, rant, and poetry. Among the recurrent visual motifs are mandalas, eyes, hieratic faces, vaginal forms with tiny clitoral accents, and a versatile shape that is readable as, alternately, a slug, a bird, and the head of a snake. Some later works—collages of scrawled nonsense poems, magazine photographs, and advertisements (including, perhaps, the artistic début of Campbell's soup)—feel uncannily intelligent. They amount to oracular experiments in graphic semiotics.

In 1921, Dr. Morgenthaler published a monograph on Wölfli; shortly thereafter, a pioneering book on the art of the insane, by the psychiatrist and art historian Hans Prinzhorn, which included a discussion of Wölfli, excited Surrealist circles in Paris. Carl Jung was among the collectors of Wölfli. The artist responded to commercial demand with smallish, one-off drawings that he contemptuously termed "bread art." Many are lovely, suggesting a brawny Paul Klee. In the nineteen-forties, Jean Dubuffet featured Wölfli in his promotion of "art *brut*"—creative expression by society's outcasts. In 1965, André Breton called Wölfli's production "one of the three or four most important œuvres of the twentieth century." There's an antique air now to such encomiums, which evoke modern beliefs in the superior authenticity and possible revolutionary portent of "primitive," childish, criminal, and otherwise anti-rational impulses. Things being as they are in the world at present, we may be hard put to conceive of reason as an obnoxious obstacle to human fulfillment. Anyway, Wölfli wasn't anti-rational. He was nuts.



Wölfli at Waldau Mental Asylum, in 1921. "Medical Faculty" (1905) shows a mastery of design and an uncanny intelligence.

COURTESY ADOLF WÖLFLI FOUNDATION, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BERN, SWITZERLAND

Outsider art enjoys little favor these days in the professional art world, where the right to be crude, weird, and nasty is reserved for artists with master's degrees from leading art schools. Sophisticates caricature a taste for outsider art, with some empirical justice, as a sign of patronizing sentimentality and populist resentment. But the intransigent grandeur of a Wölfli calls everybody's hand. He seems to be at least as troublesome for outsider fanciers as for vocational élitists. Besides having an immensely complicated and subtle technique, Wölfli is scary. Trying to make a pet of him could get your hand bitten off. The ornate, hieratic majesty of "The San Salvador" (1926), a drawing nearly five feet high and more than seven and a half feet long, dazzles at first glance, but becomes more disquieting the longer you look. Within a wide border full of musical notation and heraldic and geometric motifs, an eyelike oval of concentric bands, featuring sinister red-tinted bird shapes, encloses a targetlike mandala. A scepter-wielding, devilish African personage presides in the middle; he is flanked by other, equally daunting African faces—the palace guard. The picture projects absolute, malign power.

The common critical deprecation of outsider artists as hermetic obsessives, like birds fated to repeat their single songs, does not apply to Wölfli, whose work is robustly varied and subject to development, however odd. (Come to think of it, many a fine artist has won admission to the modern canon with an obsessive, essentially unchanging manner.) To do Wölfli justice—that is, fully to honor our spontaneous pleasure in his work—requires a bravely open mind. That virtue is well served by the admirable American Folk Art Museum, whose Wölfli show, curated by Daniel Baumann and the late Elka Spoerri, exemplifies the museum's exacting connoisseurship of outsider art along with traditional quilts, whirligigs, and other relics of demotic innocence. (It runs until May 18th.) Having already shown Darger, the museum has tentative plans for a retrospective of my own favorite outsider, the Mexican psychotic Martin Ramirez (1885-1960); his graphic repertoire of womblike tunnels and noble prosceniums shows a startling affinity to Wölfli's style.

Maintaining a strictly aesthetic sensitivity to Wölfli is difficult, but I think it's worth a try. It involves resisting various mental habits with which we police the frontiers of our sanity and our morality. At one extreme is political correctness, which is apparent in the fashionable euphemism for outsider artists as "self-taught." As if any true artist were not self-taught! (Picasso didn't learn his stuff at Picasso School.) Such misguided compunctions blunt the jagged, tatterdemalion otherness that is central to our experience of a Wölfli, a Darger, or a Ramirez. Then there's the medical model, which, confusing appreciation with diagnosis, exploits outsider art (or Michelangelo, for that matter, in the case of Dr. Freud) to show off the tricks of a rote methodology. Psychoanalysis seems increasingly passé, of course, now that psychiatry has gone chemical. Today, potential Wölflis are apt to be mute and inglorious, their explosive minds defused by clever drugs—in line with a recent ethical imperative that sets the relief of suffering above any rival value. Between one thing and another, the unruly garden of outsiders has become as diminished and as endangered, though as perilous to susceptible tourists, as virgin wilderness. ♦

From the Times.

This season, after the Knicks upset the Spurs at the Garden on Dec. 30, Sprewell happened to meet up with Carlesimo in the tunnel en route to the locker rooms and, while engaged in a brief conversation, put his arm around Carlesimo's waste.

Wouldn't a simple handshake have sufficed?

ON TELEVISION

WATCHING WANDA

A big personality hits the small screen.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

The star of "Wanda at Large" has her feet firmly planted in her own ego.

ERIC PALMA

A couple of weeks ago, NBC ran a Museum of Television & Radio special called "Great Women of Television Comedy." It was a fairly patronizing concept in the first place—"Here's a little something for the ladies"—and the show didn't, and couldn't, give many of the featured women their due (Imogene Coca, for instance, got almost no airtime); the clips usually weren't long enough and bits were either cut off in midstream or reduced to their payoff pratfalls or tag lines. Moments of illumination were rare: sitcom stars, past and present, stated the obvious about the humor in supposedly universal female rites of passage, such as dating and marriage and motherhood (the show seemed to have channelled the mind-set of the comic strip "Cathy"), but, with the exception of Jenna Elfman, who had some insight into the hilarious chocolate-making scene in "I Love Lucy," few of them had much to say about what makes certain performers or performances so funny. One couldn't help noticing that the only black woman on the special was Phylicia Rashad, who was wonderful in "The Cosby Show" but whose role as the foil for a great man in television comedy doesn't exactly put her in the great-women category; there was not so much as a nod in the direction of Isabel Sanford, Esther Rolle, or Nell Carter, or, going further back (isn't that what museums are supposed to do?), Ethel Waters and Louise Beavers, who, one after the other, had the title role in the early-fifties sitcom "Beulah." But then the special would have had to deal with the genre of maidcoms—comedies centered on black women working as domestics for white families—and it would have needed to have an idea in its head.

Over the years, few black women have staked a claim to TV comedy in the way that black men have, by stepping out in front as the star of the show. The writer and standup comic Wanda Sykes, though, does just that in her new sitcom, "Wanda at Large," on Fox. Sykes—who appeared on and wrote for "The Chris Rock Show," does field commentary on "Inside the NFL," and plays a friend of Larry David's wife on "Curb Your Enthusiasm"—is a little like Roseanne (both the comedian and the character she played): she has her feet firmly planted in her own ego, and you couldn't knock her down, though you might want to. Sykes, who also serves as a writer and a producer of her own show, has an oversized and combative personality: she's not just in the house; she's in your room and she's in your face. In "Wanda at Large," she plays Wanda Hawkins, a standup comedian whose unbuttoned style lands her a job as the counterpart to a conservative black commentator, Bradley (Phil Morris), on a Sunday-morning talk show called "The Beltway Gang." (She and Bradley are always at each other's throat; he calls her Excedrin the Entertainer and Mouth St. Helens.) Each episode opens with Wanda doing a remote spot on a provocative subject. One week, the issue of reparations to the descendants of slaves sent her out in the street, where she walked up to a white man and totted up his tab on an adding machine. She said to him, "Hi, I'm black. You owe me fifteen dollars and thirteen cents," and handed him the bill. My favorite so far had to do with certain golf clubs that don't admit women as members. Wanda shows up at one with a naked woman, and nobody objects when she asks if they can play through. Later that day, she and the woman, this time wearing clothes, return, and the gates are locked to them. But the one-two punch is still to come: you hear Wanda say, "I thought they didn't want women at this country club, but I was wrong," and then you see her in a maid's uniform and a tartan tam, pushing a housekeeping cart up to the tee. She pulls out a club and hits the ball. "Damn. Sliced it. Shoulda used a mop." (The episode aired right before the Masters.)

It's hard to know how seriously to take Wanda, since Sykes delivers her zingers with a coy, winning smile, and though she has a mouth on her, she has a high-pitched voice, which makes her difficult to read—you're not sure whether she's angry or merely whiny. But if there is a heart of gold under her crankiness she's slow to let it show. In one episode, she comes home to a surprise birthday party, planned for her by her sister-in-law, Jenny (Tammy Lauren), and she walks out, telling Jenny to get rid of everyone. In any other show, you know the character is eventually going to go back and enjoy the party, but with Wanda you're not sure. Jenny, by the way, is white—and the show treats that fact in a very by-the-way manner. In the first four episodes, it was not even commented upon, which is probably how it would be in real life at this point; Jenny, who was married to Wanda's late brother, has two school-age children, so color is old news in this family. (There is a whole parallel universe of black sitcoms on UPN, where the ways of white people are joked about frequently and blatantly, but on the major networks the jokes tend to be folded in more slyly; on a recent episode of "The Bernie Mac Show," which precedes "Wanda at Large" on Wednesday nights, Bernie becomes worked up over how the kids eat so much he can't keep food in the house. He tells his poker buddies, "I go to the doggone store so much now the security guard don't even follow me around." But the line doesn't play as a joke—it's part of a genuine conversation. One of the buddies says, "For real?," and Bernie says, "I'm serious." His friend still can't believe it. "They treat you like a real customer?" he asks incredulously. "Sometimes," Bernie says, tap-tapping the nail in.)

The main problem with "Wanda at Large" is that so far it is essentially a one-character show. Bradley is a standard stiff, and Wanda hasn't established much of a relationship with her niece and nephew. Ann Magnuson, who also plays a commentator on the talk show, barely registers. Sitcoms that highlight big personalities to the exclusion of the other characters tend to have short lives; "Wanda at Large" has a boldness that will catch some viewers as they spin the dial, but if Sykes uses up all the oxygen in the room, pretty soon viewers may surf right past it. We need to breathe, too.

Last week was National TV-Turnoff Week, during which we were urged to turn off the TV and live our lives. What? Turn off the TV, and miss Monica Lewinsky's début as the host of a new reality show? Of course, technically "Mr. Personality" is not Lewinsky's reality-show début: several years ago, she won the immunity idol on "Survivor: D.C.," though she didn't walk away with the millions in speaking fees that the contestant with whom she formed an alliance now enjoys. In "Mr. Personality," a woman has to choose Mr. Right from among twenty men without knowing what any of them look like until she has rejected them. Wearing tuxes and ugly gray sculpted masks, so that all you can see is their eyes and their mouths, the men look like gussied-up versions of the robot in "The Day the Earth Stood Still." This method of finding someone who makes the earth move is a departure for Hayley, the twenty-six-year-old woman doing the choosing. As her sister explained, "She's tried dating guys for their looks, and so far it hasn't worked out." But some of the guys are more like the old Hayley; before meeting her, one of them said, "I kept thinking, Please be hot. Please be hot."

Lewinsky didn't have much of a role in the first episode, except to stand by and look sympathetic during awkward moments—when, say, one of the suitors presented Hayley with a book of basketball anecdotes. But scenes from future episodes show Lewinsky acting as Hayley's co-conspirator, as they spy on the men, who've been supplied with temptresses in the form of hula dancers. Lewinsky is aghast when one of the men asks a hula honey to "sit on Daddy's lap" and another invites one into his room. Who would have thought, at this late date, that Monica Lewinsky, of all people, could be shocked by the sight of men behaving badly? ♦

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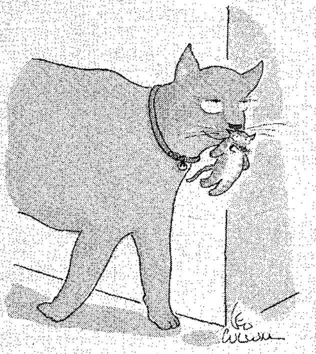

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

PRIVATE WORLDS

"The Dancer Upstairs" and "A Mighty Wind."

BY DAVID DENBY

Throughout the first forty minutes or so of John Malkovich's "The Dancer Upstairs," I wanted to walk out. This political-manhunt movie, starring the Spanish actor Javier Bardem (from "Before Night Falls"), is set in a nameless and spooked South American country, and at times it seems a spooked piece of filmmaking. Malkovich, directing his first movie (he has directed in the theatre for twenty years), frames his scenes a little shakily—now and then, he rushes through things, as if clarity were a philistine vice to be avoided. He uses Spanish, Italian, and Argentinean actors, and you can hear them trying to be relaxed and colloquial in English—a straining for ease which ends all possibility of ease, and destroys the mood in certain key scenes. Some of the conversations begin promisingly and end in the air. Intentional or not, the fuzzy quality of the exposition compounds the tendency of the screenwriter, Nicholas Shakespeare, who adapted his own 1995 novel, to indulge in a murky allusiveness. Slightly baffled, I found myself wishing that two genuine masters of the suggestive—Graham Greene and Carol Reed—would wake from the dead and take over. Nevertheless, I hung in there, and I'm not sorry I did. "The Dancer Upstairs" is an interesting beginning for Malkovich. Shakespeare's novel was a retelling of the pursuit and capture of Abimael Guzmán, the ex-philosophy professor who became the head of the Shining Path, the suicidal revolutionary group that terrorized Peru in the nineteen-eighties and early nineties. Torture and mystification—and a love of death—were at the center of their failed struggle. Guzmán, who wanted to establish a Maoist state in Peru, inspired his followers to commit incomprehensible crimes against the innocent. "The Dancer Upstairs" has moments when all of this is creepily alive.

The heart of Malkovich's appeal as an actor is his perversity—his silken malevolence and taunting humor, his way of finding a hidden, almost private area of emphasis in a scene or a remark. An actor who likes to keep the audience off balance, he has imposed himself through sheer force of personality, creating if not a cult then at least a mystique. (No one has proposed making a movie called "Being Harrison Ford.") In "The Dancer Upstairs," Malkovich's perversity takes the form of underdramatizing the material. Since Shakespeare adapted his own story, Malkovich may have had no choice, but I think it was a mistake to hold the fictionalized Guzmán—known as Ezequiel, after the vengeful Biblical prophet Ezekiel—at a distance. The center of the movie is a policeman, Agustin Rejas (Bardem), who spends years chasing Ezequiel while remaining an entirely rational, humane, and good-humored man—the opposite of the terrorist in every way. When we're not sure what is going on in "The Dancer Upstairs," we look at Bardem's mild and handsome face for guidance. I don't think anyone has ever played a police detective with so little stress or anger; Bardem has the rueful equanimity of one of Marcello Mastroianni's ironic intellectuals of forty years ago. He's charming, but his performance isn't exciting, and we miss the tensions a high-wire actor like Jean-Louis Trintignant or Jean Reno would have brought to the role.

Some of the dialogue scenes are hurt by casualness, but the atmosphere gains from it. In the capital city, cryptic, intimidating posters show up on the street. Rejas looks through his car window and sees a dead dog dangling from a lamppost

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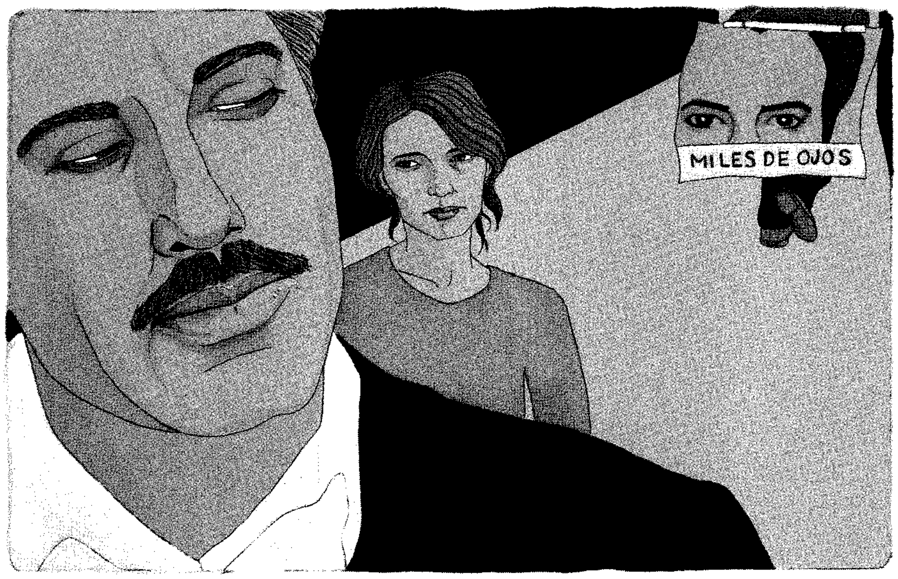
with the phrase "Long live Presidente Ezequial" written on a sign around its neck. The guerrillas exist everywhere and nowhere; they are hit-and-run artists of revolution, staging gruesome acts at their own convenience, and Malkovich doesn't prepare us for the horror, or underline it with ominous music. Terrible things just happen: children blow themselves up; Rejas, riding through the countryside, passes a dead man hanging upside down and in flames—at least, that's what we think we see (it goes by in a flash). Malkovich builds up a picture of a society in which spectacular ferocities have overtaken reality—a society delegitimatized by violence and hapless to defend itself. Peasants and villagers murmur in awe; in the capital, the military government automatically imposes martial law, an old habit. There are sudden blackouts followed by teasing displays of fireworks staged by the conspirators. Is there a revolution or not? No one is sure. Rejas keeps his investigation alive, even though he's overwhelmed by the crimes and surrounded by passive idiots. It's almost as if he were the only functioning intelligence in the country.



Javier Bardem and Laura Morante in John Malkovich's directorial début.

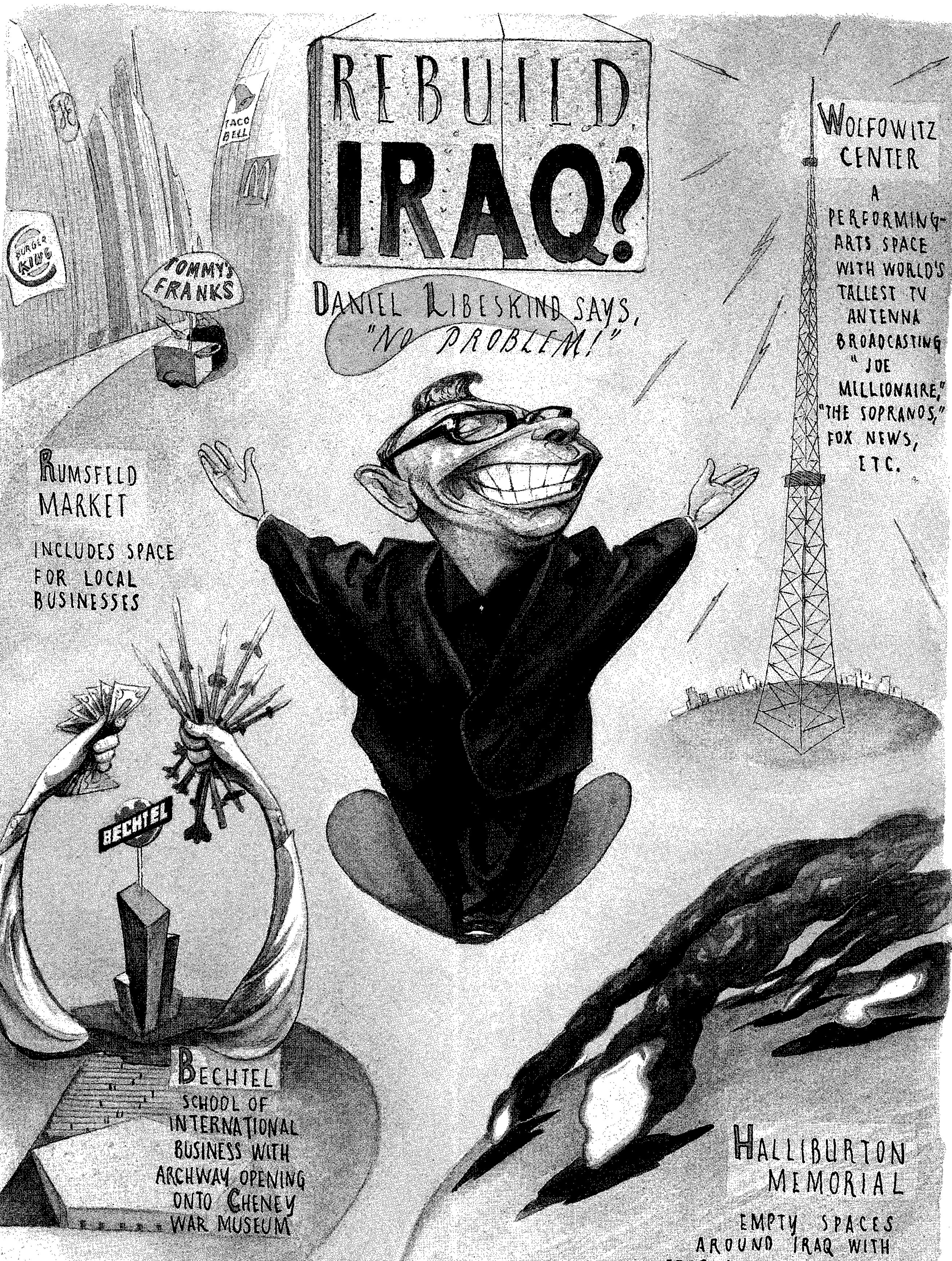
LARA TOMLIN

The movie has a love story, too—Rejas's infatuation with his daughter's ballet teacher (Laura Morante), a lovely woman who, he comes to realize, is involved in dangerous activities. Struggling in English, Bardem and Morante, who is Italian, don't connect in any satisfying way, and scenes that should be precise in their ambiguity are just vague. How people of good will, even kindly people, can become so caught up in preposterous fantasies of salvation that they will die for them is a subject implicit in the material, and I wish Malkovich had taken it on. The final confrontation between Rejas and Ezequiel is flat: we want some anger, some fire. "The Dancer Upstairs" is a dramatic failure, but, at its best, it offers a frightening suggestion of the way terror can alter reality so thoroughly that, step by step, the fantastic becomes accepted as the mere commonplace.

The comic actor and writer Christopher Guest was a secret weapon on "Saturday Night Live"—not as celebrated as Dan Aykroyd or John Belushi, and perhaps not as funny, but subtler, quieter, more acid. When Guest did a character, he tended to get deep inside the man, even losing himself, and he gave his figures a stony authenticity. Writing (and later directing) mock documentaries, he kept to the same principles. "This Is Spinal Tap" (directed by Rob Reiner), "Waiting for Guffman" and "Best in Show" (both co-written with Eugene Levy), and the new "A Mighty Wind" are not quite burlesques, not quite parodies, and not really satires, either, if by satire you mean something with a reforming or cleansing instinct. Guest does not want to reform his subjects; he wants to discover them. He and his cronies (Levy, Harry Shearer, Michael McKean, Catherine O'Hara, et al.) have invented a new kind of affectionate satire which is all but indistinguishable from an embrace. A dreadful Brit-twit heavy-metal band attempting a comeback; a provincial theatre company putting on a show; neurotic dog-lovers preparing for a contest; a reunion of Peter, Paul, and Mary-type folksingers—most of the subjects are inhabitants of the drearier corners of show business, unconscious dwellers in a land so specialized that the rest of the world has fallen away for them. They do not see or hear themselves as we see and hear ourselves. And, in the end, the movies are not so much mock documentaries as true records of a deep-down dorkiness that is a form of blessedness. In "A Mighty Wind," Eugene Levy, as a folksinger who has spent some time in the bin, talks with an agonizing slowness. He takes comedy to the edge of tragedy, then comes back again, and when he pulls himself together and sings we breathe a sigh of relief.

Guest's secret is that he doesn't make comedy do more work than it should. He always has a clear narrative structure, and his characters often develop further than we expect. For all the jokes and the play—the fatuous self-importance, the fumbles and errors, the disasters large and small—he creates a narrative that involves us in the same way the narrative of a standard fiction film does. In "Waiting for Guffman," the small-town thespians who turn their backs on routine jobs in the hope of stardom may be deluded and pathetic, but their aspirations are not absurd, and we watch with some sympathy as they struggle to put on a show. Guest is a realist: he stays within our actual world, more or less. Seen now, in the period of rock's long decline, the 1984 "Spinal Tap," in which the band's American tour slides into disaster, appears as a tragicomic epitaph for an art form that succumbed to its own unfulfillable ambitions. In "A Mighty Wind," the sunshine-bright folksinger alluding to her dismal past as a porn star cannot stop herself from boasting of her on-camera specialty, and a Swedish-born New York public-television producer (Ed Begley, Jr.) drops Yiddish into every sentence in order to remain successful. It's our world, all right, but with the bizarre undertones brought up to the surface, where they shine with the happy knowledge that they have been appreciated at last. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY STEVE BRODNER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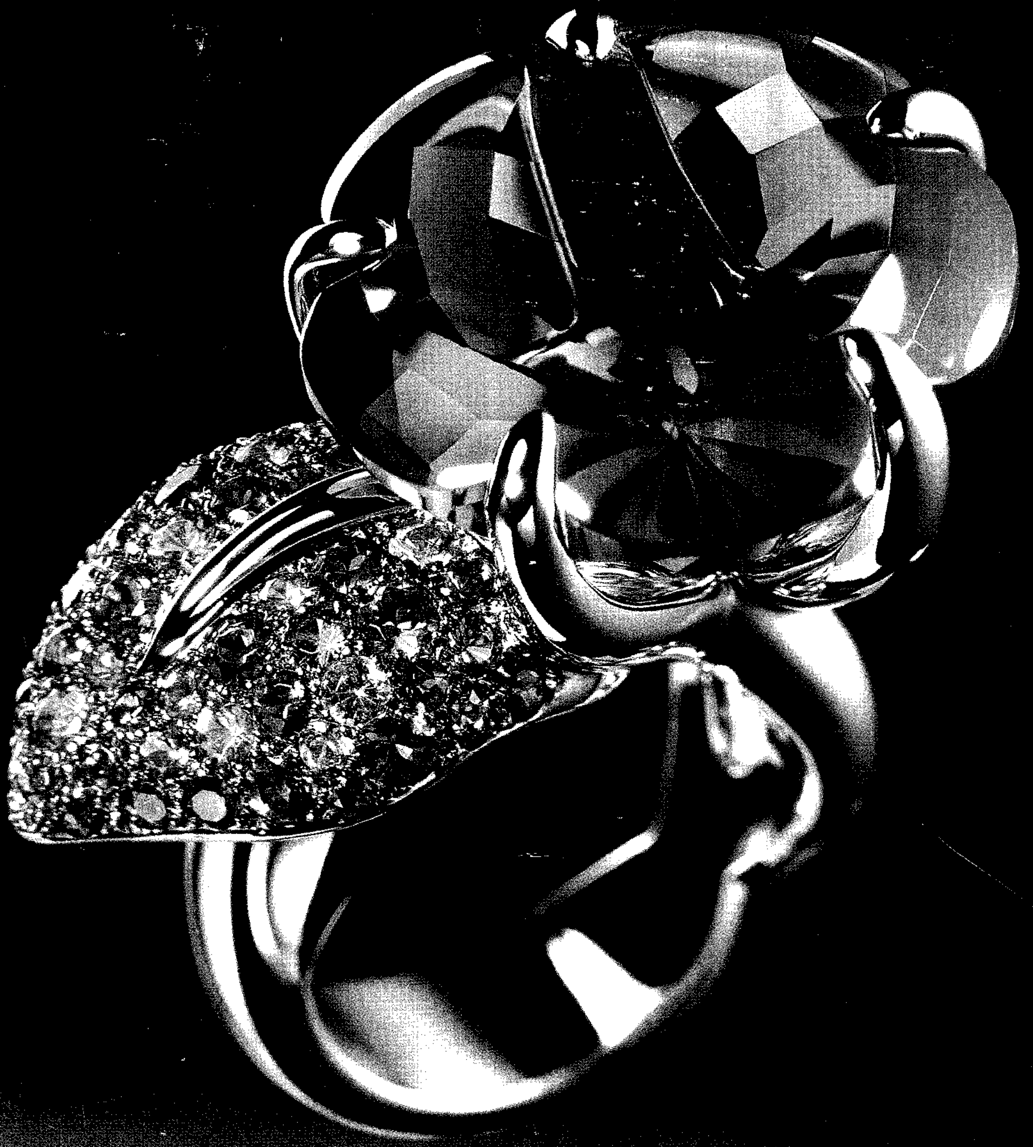

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